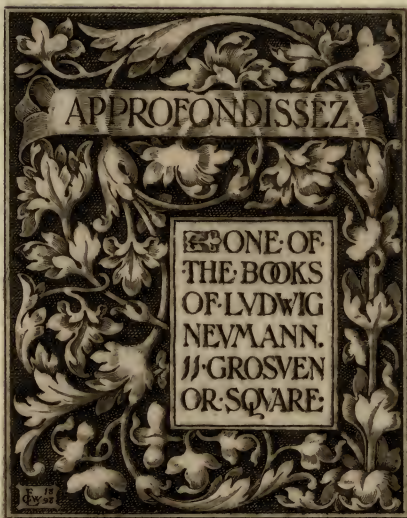


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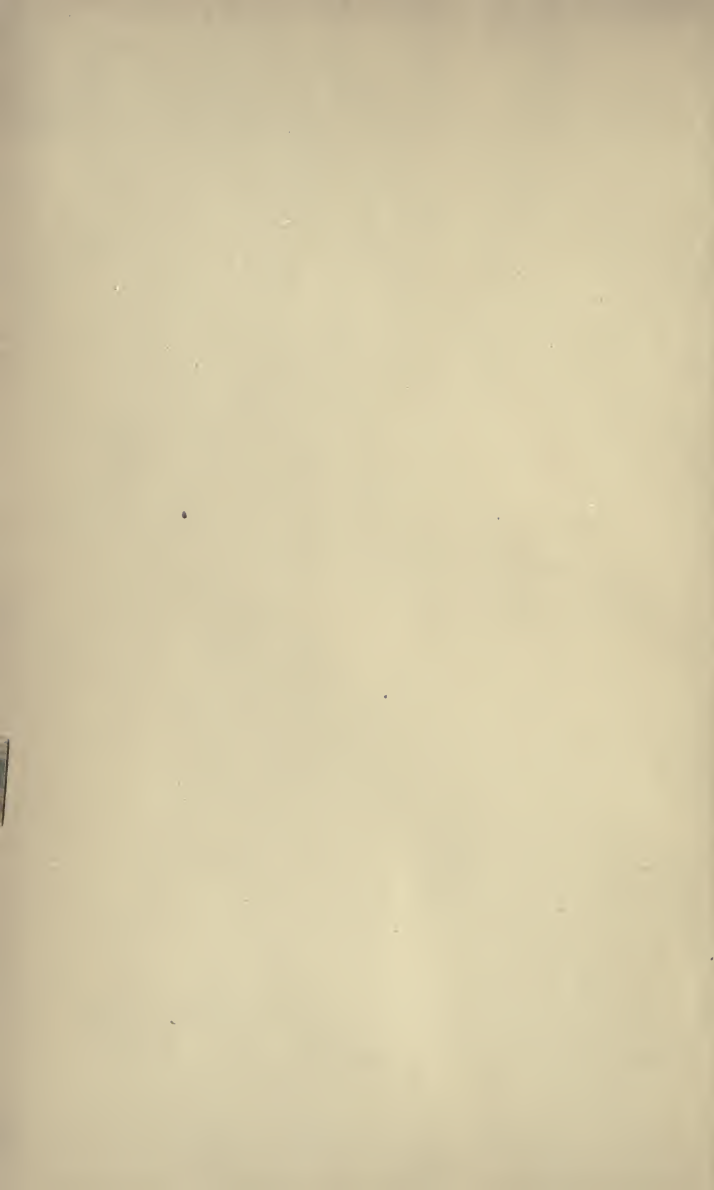
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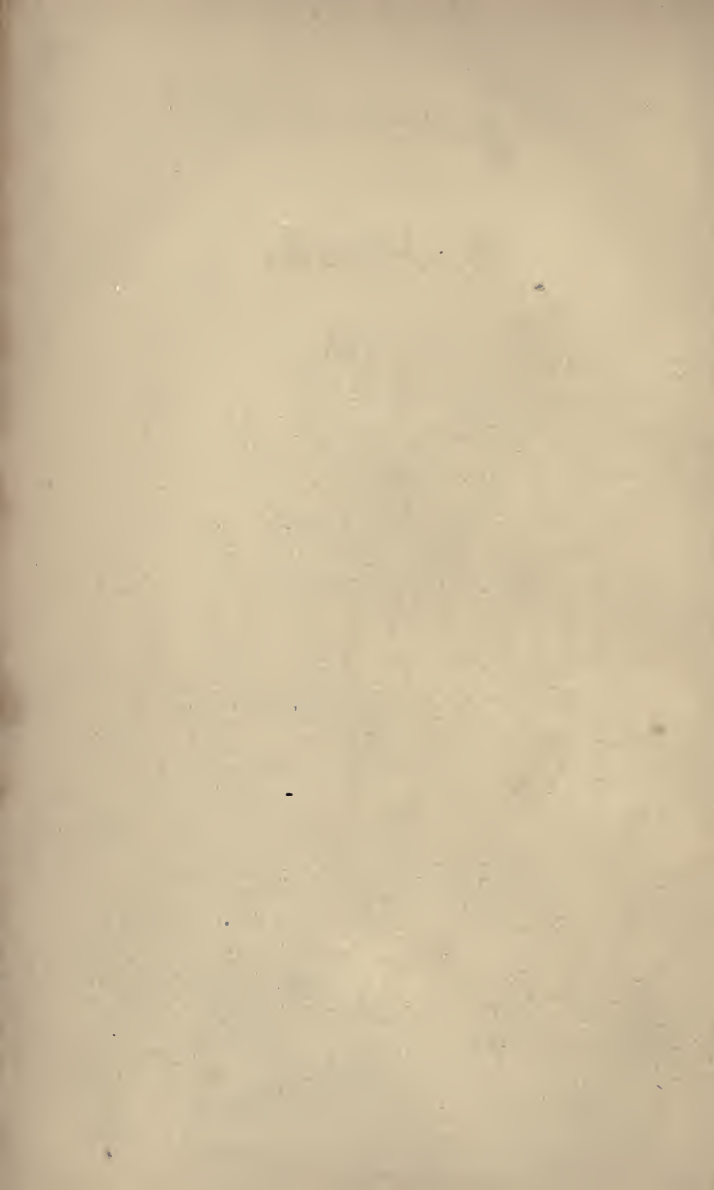
Don Horter



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THE
ADVENTURES
of a
Salmon.





THE ADVENTURES

OF

A SALMON

IN THE RIVER DEE,

BY A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

William Ayrton
.. " ..

TOGETHER WITH

NOTES FOR THE FLY-FISHER

IN

NORTH WALES.

LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING;
GEORGE PRICHARD, CHESTER.
1853.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE very general interest manifested of late on the subject which has suggested the following pages, would seem to render any apology for their publication unnecessary; nor does the Author pretend to claim the merit of originality, where others of such pre-eminence have already enlisted the sympathies of the public on its behalf.

In attempting to give a summary of the principal difficulties and dangers which attend the propagation and preservation of the Salmon in the Dee, he has been instigated primarily by a desire to awaken a warmer interest in the welfare of that particular river; and he has been encouraged by a conviction that a statement of facts, taken from any locality, by one to whom opportunity was afforded, could not fail to apply generally; and that, as the mite of a contributor to a cause of general import, his efforts, however humble, might, he trusts, be accepted in a kindly spirit, and offered without presumption.

Chester, St. David's Day, 1853.



Adventures of a Salmon.

Chapter I.

THE recollections of my early life are few and somewhat indefinite.

Probably they would be still more so but for the faculty with which our tribe are endowed ; a faculty peculiar to most migratory beings, and, perhaps, in none more powerfully developed than in the *Salmo salar* ; that faculty of early recollection, which both prompts and facilitates our constant return to the scenes of our birth and infancy.

My first reminiscence is that of floating about in a shallow part of the river Dee, which at that spot ran without a ripple over a broad gravel bed, every pebble of which seemed to share in the searching rays of the unshadowed sun. I very well recollect experiencing a negative sense of enjoyment in the first use of my fins ; not absolutely seeking motion, but just hovering about and playing with the stream ; sometimes

letting it take me a few yards down the river and then,—just as the edge of the grey gravel bed seemed sinking away into unknown depths,—putting forth my little strength and returning to the safe shallows, where no destructive monsters were lurking to destroy me. Not that I had any idea of danger; oh no! that has come with after years of experience. I was then in happy ignorance. I did not even know the dangers from which I had already escaped. I viewed with an admiration in which fear was not unmingled, some beings whom I regarded as leviathans, who, with immense scales glittering in the sunshine, came wandering in parties of six, or twelve, or even twenty, through the very shallows in which my brothers and myself were rejoicing, apparently eager in the pursuit of prey of which we formed no part. I knew not then that these fish, whom I have since learned to look down upon with some contempt, were seeking the very eggs, the spawn, of which I and others were the produce; and that had not the powerful rays of the sun brought me into existence before I was disturbed from the loose gravel which protected me, I should certainly have served for food to these ravenous creatures. I was now, however, beyond the range of food for Chub or Dace.

By the way, I well remember that for some days I sought no food myself. A small bag (though almost as large as myself) hung suspended from my throat, and gave me some annoyance, by impeding my early movements; this bag I much rejoiced to find diminishing, and one morning my delight was great at being entirely rid of it; but with its departure came a new sense; the first cravings of hunger quickened my already increased powers of volition, and I eagerly began to seek for food, like the finny tribe around me.

In this early stage of my career I must plead guilty to having myself sought prey too nearly related to my former state. Spawn which had been washed from its bed, and came floating through the shallows, constituted the first food I nibbled at; and thus, I very much fear, I have given too much way to a temptation which has served to destroy some thousands of my own species, ere yet they saw the light. I soon, however, learned to pursue with avidity a different food in the insect tribe which rejoiced in their own element as they darted hither and thither through the clear water, in pursuit of prey still more minute than themselves.

Very soon the gravel bed and its sunny shallows ceased to content me. I began to shun

the shoals of gaudy minnows which shared its quiet waters ; and sometimes following the admired dace in their return to deeper streams, I learned to delight in what seemed to me the wide world of waters beyond its boundaries. Daily my excursions became more prolonged and extensive ; until finding myself powerful enough to contend with the stream in a shallow part about the very centre of the river, I finally deserted the spot which gave me birth, for this now more agreeable resort, and passed my hours in wandering from one part of the stream to another ; awhile chasing the flies which alighted for a moment on its surface,—anon hurrying after a morsel of grain floating down the river,—seizing with avidity a stray worm or beetle,—or retiring to rest beneath the shadow of a large stone which caused a curling eddy in the centre of the stream.

I was now entering on that stage of my existence in which I became dignified with the appellation of the Samlet, or Smelt. Still inferior in size to the dace of my early acquaintance, I was assuming something of the character and beautiful proportions which distinguished my later life, and became myself conscious of beauty and power : the colouring of my very minute and silvery scales assumed a vivid and gay ap-

pearance ; regular marks of deep violet displayed themselves at intervals along my sides, and the delicate tracery which formed my fins and tail united itself with muscles of powerful proportions. In short, I found myself already of superior grade to the poor sleepy dace, and enjoyed darting through rapids which his less vigorous nature would have shunned to encounter. My companions were now the wily and audacious trout, (a branch, indeed of our family) and though instinct taught me to shun too near an approximation with those of larger growth, yet our haunts, habits, and pursuits were for the most part identical.

As the season advanced our food became more plentiful. The water abounded with rich swarms of delicious winged insects which floated down its surface, until, glutted with the large brown May flies that came sailing along, with wings extended to the sunshine, or fluttering just within our reach,—fed to satiety with gnat, moth, and beetle,—green, brown, red, yellow, and dun—that offered themselves for our repast,—the summer evening often found us jumping for sport at the little midges that hung in swarms suspended over the surface of some quiet pool, shaded by willows and wild alders.

It was about this period of my existence that

an incident occurred which can never be forgotten, which caused me at the time infinite alarm and dismay, and for the first time in my life taught me, by sad experience, the reality of pain and danger. It was long afterwards ere I knew exactly what had happened to me. The shock itself was so sudden, its effects so stunning and bewildering, that my senses were for the time entirely taken away, and when I returned to consciousness all that had occurred appeared to me like a horrid dream, which I could neither account for nor understand.

It was on a fine evening towards the latter end of May, that, having a well satisfied appetite, I was enjoying a careless pursuit of occasional flies which passed down the stream, when I became suddenly aware of the approach of a trout of unusually large size, who had emerged from a neighbouring deep hole, from which, as his residence, I had always kept at a respectful distance. Rather fluttered by his appearance, I darted away among the shallower water, whence, turning again to regard him, I was reassured by perceiving that I was not the object of his pursuit, and became aware at the same moment of two very beautiful insects, which seemed, the one to fly, and the other to pursue across the surface of the stream, and which had apparently

tempted him from his lurking-place : between these two he seemed to hesitate, and after following them with longing eye, to the very edge of the river,—he, as if struck by a sudden sense of danger,—again darted rapidly past me, and sought retreat in the deep waters of his shady covert. Again and again, to my surprise, the two beautiful strangers came floating passed me, but no wary trout pursued them as before, and undeterred by his presence, I hastily rose to the surface, and seized, what seemed to be, the glittering beetle as it swept across the stream. Suddenly a sharp sting as it were, pierced my jaw; I felt myself lifted at once from the river to fly through the air, and fall violently among the green grass of a meadow which lined its banks; a choking sensation seized my gills, which seemed to lose the power of respiration; a hot human hand lifted me from the ground; I heard a voice, in a tone of mingled annoyance and compassion, exclaim, “Poor little ——!” and all consciousness vanished. When I came to myself I found myself again in my native element, floating exhausted on my side in some shallow water; it was some time ere I regained strength or presence of mind to seek a more secure asylum; and when I once more found myself under the shadow of a stone in deep water, long

did I ponder, and wonder, and tremble in meditating over this strange event. It was to me a complete mystery, and long remained so, nor am I quite sure that I even now fully understand it. For some time after this affair I carefully eschewed all glittering beetles; and it was long before I again rose boldly and unhesitatingly at the fly at all; but hunger has no law; and finding, after sundry tremulous and hesitating essays, that I might still feed securely as before, I at length, by degrees, forgot my fears.

Not long after this memorable event I had a narrow escape from a danger which I more fully understood, and which terminated fatally to one of my joyous companions. We, Samlets, were not of solitary habits; though not sailing after each other in sleepy shoals, like the tame dace, we kept much together, and at the time of which I speak, the waters of the Dee were peopled by multitudes of our family. Dropping down one day, with three or four others, to the tail of a stream which poured its long continued ripple into a pool of, to us, unknown depth and extent, and intent on the pursuit of the insect tribe on the surface of the water, we took no note of a monstrous being of our own species, which at first appeared like a log of wood, or the branch of a dead tree, as he lay motionless, and

but for his bright green eyes, apparently lifeless, basking in the shallow water at one side of the pool, and seemingly indifferent to all that past around him. Up and down the stream—before and behind him—nearer and nearer we ventured, in idle curiosity, nor dreamt of danger; until suddenly, with a rush that sent the waters eddying from his tail, he dashed among us, his white belly gleaming in the sunshine; and never shall I forget the thrill of despair with which I beheld those enormous jaws extended to devour, and felt myself, for the moment, at the mercy of a ravenous Pike! Fortunately for me his desires were fixed on one of my brother samlets, at that moment close to my side, and those frightful rows of teeth having closed with a snap on the bleeding sides of his wretched victim, he bore him off in triumph, to discuss the feast at leisure, in the deep waters which soon hid him from our view.

Time would fail me did I attempt to recount the thousand and one perils from which I escaped during the first year of my existence; the two I have related must serve as specimens of the dangers and disasters which surround the young salmon. Suffice it to say, that escape I *did*, the repeated snares of the angler; the nets and night-lines of the poacher; the attacks of pike,

large trout, otters, rats, &c., &c.,—and passed the first twelve months of my life wandering from Llangollen to Llansaintffraid, up to Corwen, Croggyn, and even paid a hasty visit to the waters of the Tegid Lake, where however, I did not remain many hours—convinced that in *that* direction the wandering propensities I already felt were not to be pursued farther.

The returning spring found me still in the Dee, now become really a handsome fish, much too large to fear a trout, and too wary and swift in my movements to have much cause for dread of even the voracious pike, so long as I kept clear of his deep stronghold. Still, I was but a Samlet, though of last year's growth; the violet streaks yet marked my speckled sides, and my long elegant form differed much from that of the Salmon morts, whom I occasionally encountered, and from whom I learnt something of my future destiny.

As the summer advanced, an instinct, which I cannot describe, led me to direct my wanderings down the river; each successive flood, which followed a few days' rain, gave me an opportunity, which I eagerly seized, of floating still further with the turbid current, and of passing with comparative security, those long deep pools which succeed each other in some localities of

the Dee, and where, in clearer and lower water, I should infallibly have fallen a sacrifice to the pike with which they abound.

From stream to stream,—from pool to pool,—over first one weir, and then another; until the month of June found me laying in the quiet still water, just above the weir at Chester, where at length a sweeping flood carried me over the causeway, and on the very next day I was rolling in the delights of salt water, seeking another food, and revelling, as it were, in the fresh enjoyment of a new existence and of another element.

Chapter II.

LEAVING our young Salmon in embryo to make his first trip to the sea, suppose we take a short glance at the river Dee, and enquire what is known of its history ; its former and present state, and the prospects which it may possess of continuing to be among the most celebrated rivers of the kingdom, for the quality, the quantity, and the size of its fish.

That the fishery of the Dee has always, at least beyond the memory of man, or of existing written record, been valuable, and probably always a salmon river, there remains ample evidence.

The right of fishing on the Dee, has ever been a highly esteemed privilege ; it frequently formed part of the royal grants, or was leased as part of the royal revenue ; and both nobles and priests, the Abbot of St. Werburgh, and the

Mayor of Chester, laid claim to certain portions of the river as tenaciously as of any other manor or domain.

Of these grants and privileges in the upper parts of the river scarcely any records are left, though no doubt they existed. The Lords of the Manor, and large landed proprietors probably exercised arbitrary rights in their own immediate neighbourhood, and monopolised the fishing within certain limits; but it was not likely that they would neglect to substantiate their authority by deeds, which it was easy for them to procure. A river which was so valuable for its fishery at Chester, cannot but have been also richly abundant in the neighbourhood of Bangor Monachorum and Valle Crucis Abbey; but the records concerning both secular and ecclesiastical estates in a remote country, are not so easily accessible as those relating to a city of ancient privileges and importance, and are either hidden in private collections or have ceased to exist.

The only records we have, therefore, of the Fishery of the Dee relate chiefly to Chester. The first of them occurs in the charter of Hugh Lupus to the Monks of St. Werburgh, in 1093. The original of this charter is lost, but it is recapitulated in a confirmatory charter from the second Earl, Ranulph, which has been

lately found,* and which, among other things, grants to the Monks “a full tenth of the fishery at Eton,† and of all that pertain thereto,” “and a tenth of the fishery of Rueland (Rhydlan) and a tenth from the ships;” (de navibus) supposed to be vessels bringing fish to the port of Chester. Ranulph, after confirming all the former Charter, gives “the tenth penny of all my revenue of the city, and of every fish taken in the Dee” (in aquâ de Dee.)

As no mention is made of any particular portion of the river, we gather that the Earl then claimed the whole of it, at least within the rights of the Palatinate. This right must have been alienated by subsequent grants of which we have no record; as we find in the 17th of Edwd. the 1st (1289), that the rights, vested in the Crown, as Earl of Chester, were confined to the Mills and fishery “belonging to the Bridge.”

In 1227 the freemen of Llangollen endowed the Monks of Valle Crucis Abbey “with a

* Translation read at the November Monthly Meeting of the Chester Archæological Society, by the Rev. W. Massie.

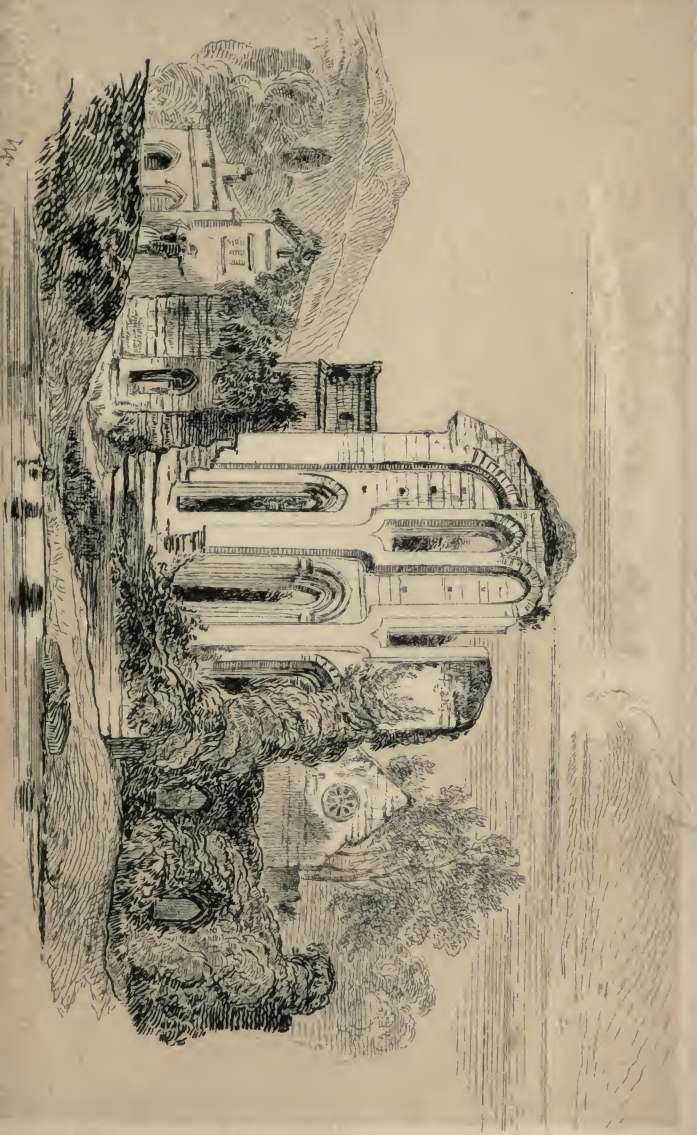
† The Earl’s right to the possession of Eton is mentioned in Domesday, with the particulars of the fishery. “Ibi piscaria reddit M salmones et VI pisca-tores et una acra prati.”—*Ormerod* ii, 452.

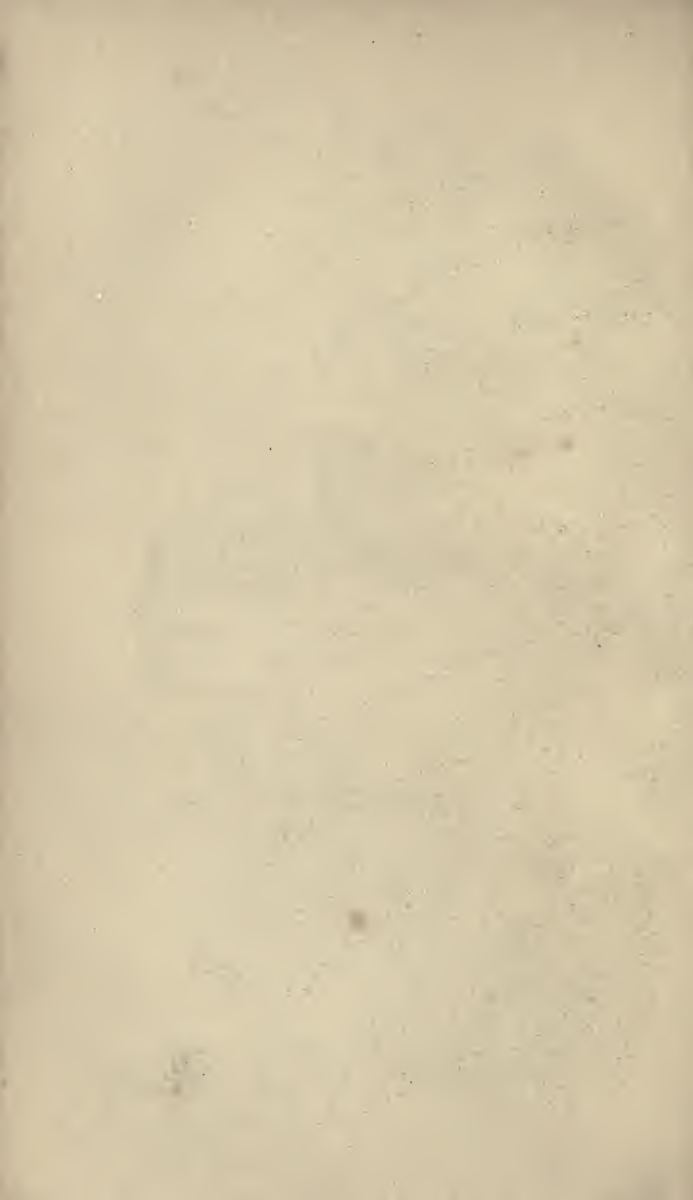
fishery in a part of the river near the town; and for want of a seal of their own they affixed to their grant that of the founder. The monks soon after erected new works on the river for the purpose of taking the fish, which caused a dispute between them and the freemen; the latter agreed to refer the matter, for decision," (oh simple hearted freemen of Llangollen!) "to the abbot and five monks of their own choice, who were to determine it on oath. Madog and his secretary John Parvus (Little John?) appointed a day for the purpose. The meeting was held, the oath administered, and the abbot and monks decided in their own favour! They alleged that they had bought the right of erecting what works they pleased, and of repairing them, from the heirs of Llangollen. The Prince confirmed the decree and the donation of the fishery, by an instrument dated A.D. 1234."*

Our next authority occurs in 1219, (Edward I.,) and is so interesting that we venture to give a translation of part of it in full.

It consists of the order for, and the result of, a commission from the King to inquire into certain losses, said to have been sustained by one of his officers, to whom he had assigned "his mills of

* *Archæologia Cambrensis*—1st series, 1 vol. p. 23, quoting Pennant, Edition 1810, vol. 2, p. 5.





Chester and his fishery in the water of Dee," for an annual rent of £200. It is observable that this is the only document in which we have this part of the Fishery distinctly named apart from the Dee Mills, (with which it was in later times always conveyed), and stated as belonging to the Bridge. The record runs thus ;—

“Writ from King Edward the 1st, wherein (having lately confided to Master Richard his Engineer, his Mills of Chester and his fishery in the water of Dee, belonging to the bridge over that water, to hold for a term of 12 years, on yielding to his Exchequer at Chester, annually, two hundred pounds ; and the same Richard declaring that by reason of inundations of the said waters frequently occurring, he had sustained serious loss and damage) commissions Reginald de Grey, his Justice of Chester, that he should diligently enquire how much damage and loss the said Richard had suffered from the said cause ; and if the said Richard had any blame therein or not. Dated 7 day of September, in the 17th year of his reign.

“Inquisition being made, in the same year, a jury declared, That after our Lord the King had delivered his Fishery of the bridge of Chester to Master Richard the Engineer for a lease of 12 years ; in the first year of the same lease, so many inundations of water had frequently arisen, whilst the said Richard remained on the King's service at Karnarvon, that it had not been possible to set the fish traps [*crates*] under the bridge ; and that the aforesaid fishing pools and granaries together with the walls of the mills, had been thrown

down and carried away; by which the said Richard had sustained a loss and damage of 40 pounds. Also that for the three following years, whilst the said Richard, by occasion of wars, was serving our Lord the King in Wales; through superabundant inundations of waters, the pools and traps aforesaid, together with the Causeway had been dispersed and carried away whence the said Richard in regard to the aforesaid Fishery had sustained damage and loss to the value of 60 Pounds. Also at the time that the said Richard was engaged in the service of our Lord the King at Trosselan; the Causeway aforesaid by similar inundations remained thrown down and carried away; through which the aforesaid mills, for nearly one quarter of a year, had not been able to grind. Whence from this and such like inundations, frequently for the whole term aforesaid, happening, the aforesaid mills had most frequently remained without working; through which the said Richard by loss of multure in the aforesaid time, had suffered loss and damage to the amount of 54 pounds.”*

It appears by the foregoing that the right of fishing in that part of the river immediately attached to the Bridge and the Mills was valued at about £20 a-year; a great sum in those days.

In the reign of Edward III. Robert de Eton held the office of “Grand Serjeant of the Dee,” which had even then so long been an office of value and dignity, that he claimed it as belonging

* Harleian MSS, 2053—171

to his family, "by prescription of himself and his ancestors having held the same beyond legal memory." The serjeancy of the Dee extended from Eton Weir to Arnoldsheire.* The service consisted in clearing the river of all nets improperly placed there, and of taking them to Chester Castle to be condemned; on account of which service he claimed certain of the nets, together with the fish taken in them, and also the privilege of a ferry-boat across the river at Eaton.† It appears that the weir at Eton existed at this time, as certain tolls are granted to Robert de Eton

* The locality of Arnolds-hire, Arnolds-heire, or Arnolds-hare, has been a matter of some dispute. Ormerod and others place it opposite Chester Castle; Lysons, with greater reason supposes it to be the Red Stones near Hoylake; but a consultation of the deeds and papers relating to the Serjeancy of the Dee, among the muniments at Eaton Hall, (to which, by the courtesy of the Marquess of Westminster, we have had free access) shews the locality to have been, either the Point of Ayre itself (as the penultimate of Arnoldsheire suggests) or some spot in the immediate neighbourhood.

† The charge for ferrying being somewhat singular;—"for which he shall be paid by the neighbours according to their pleasure, but shall receive from every stranger if he has a horse and is a merchant, one halfpenny; if not a merchant, *the payment to be at his option.*"

in his office of Serjeant of the Dee for every boat which passed his weir.

John de Eton, the son and heir of this Robert de Eton, is commanded by a warrant from Prince Henry IV. to clear all obstructions from the Dee, and bring the forfeited nets to the Castle of Chester, as "Custos Ripariæ de Dee." Frequent mention is made up to this date, among other rights of fishing possessed by different parties, of "Stalls in the Dee." Sometimes they are called stall nets, sometimes nets; and some doubt has arisen as to what these rights of "Stalls in the Dee" were meant to express. Robert de Eton, in right of his serjeancy, claimed "two stalls and two free boats on the Dee." Among the temporalities of the Abbey of St. Werburgh at the dissolution are mentioned "vii fyshynge stalls wt in the water of Dee, in the P'ysshe of Saynt Marie's in Chester;" and it appears from Robert de Eton's title as Serjeant that these nets were set, or drawn, from Dee Bridge to Blacon; for he claims "a moiety of all nets forfeited and of the fish therein as far as stall nets are placed, *viz.* from Dee Bridge to Blaken." It appears most likely that these were fixed, or stake nets, of certain dimensions, within certain boundaries, which no one had a right to set unless they could show some grant from one of the Earls of Chester. The fishery of the King's part, stated

in Edward I.'s reign to belong to the Bridge, as being worth £20, seems to have been estimated at a very similar value in the reign of Henry VII.; but the powers before exercised by the "Serjeant of the Dee," were at this time claimed by the Corporation, under letters patent from that Monarch. An inspeximus existing in the Muniment-rooms in Chester Castle, lately brought to light by Mr. Black, Assistant Keeper of the Rolls, and bearing on this question, contains a charter of which the following is a translation :—

<p>"Charter both of the Fee Farm and of other Pri- vileges granted to the Burgesses of the Lord the King's City of Ches- ter.</p>	}	<p>Henry, by the grace of God King of England and France and Lord of Ireland, to the Archbishops, &c.</p>
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* * * * *

"We have granted, moreover, to the same citizens and to their successors, for us and our heirs, that the same mayor or sheriffs, their heirs or successors in perpetual future times, have a scrutiny in the water of Dee from a certain place called the Irenbrigge, unto a certain place, Arnoldshire, to survey and search all nets, weirs, and other engines for taking fishes, found in the same water, and, as well for examination as for enquiry to take, carry, retain, and at their pleasure to burn, all and singular those things which shall happen to be found, set, or erected there against the form of any statute set forth or ordained; or to the destruction

of the young fishes called fry, in punishment of those who had so set or erected, or hereinafter presume to set or erect such nets, weirs, or engines. And according to the laws ordinances and customs of the aforesaid set forth to bring to justice and to amerce all and singular those so setting the same nets, weirs, or engines there, or to set fines or other penalties so to inflict according to the ordinances aforesaid. And that they have all fines and amercements, issues and forfeitures for the aforesaid transgressions, howsoever assessed, and by themselves their sheriffs or minister to be collected and set. We will also and grant, and under heavy forfeiture we prohibit that no one do make carry or take over, or presume to make, carry, to take over, trenches into the said water of Dee, within the metes, limits or or bounds aforesaid, or dung or other filth in boats or other vessels through the water aforesaid, under pain of forfeiture of those boats, vessels, and fined according to the discretion of the Mayor and Sheriffs of the City aforesaid, which forfeiture and fine aforesaid, we grant and will to be had and perceived to the Citizens of the City aforesaid and their successors, in relief and payment of their farm of the City of Chester aforesaid

* * * * *

In witness of which thing we have caused these our letters to be made patent. Witness myself at Chester, the 6th day of April, in the 21st year of our reign." * * * * *

The Mills of Dee.

The accounts of Elizabeth, relict of Hugh Hurlston, farmer, of the grain mill of Dee, with the fishery of the waters of Dee, called the Kynges's Pole; and of

Hamaan Goodman, William Shaa, and Roger Smyth, occupiers of the Fulling Mill there for the time aforesaid.

Farm of the Fishery of the
Water of Dee, called
the Kynges Pole. }

And of twenty-four pounds of the farm of the fishery and fish of a certain stank of the Lord the King, called the Kynges Pole of Dee, so demised to Hugh Hurlton, to have and to hold, to the aforesaid Hugh, and to his assigns, from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, in the 19th year of the King that now is, Henry the 7th, unto end of the term of twenty years then immediately following, and fully to complete; rendering, therefore, yearly over and above all manner of charges, by the said Hugh or his assigns, to be made and sustained in this behalf to the aforesaid Lord the King, and his heirs, Earls of Chester, £24, at the feast of Easter and St. Michael the Archangel, by letters patent, under the seal of his Exchequer of Chester, dated the 26th day of September, in the 19th year of his reign, and enrolled in the original of the minister's accounts of the 19th year of the King aforesaid by mainprize of John Clyffe, James Hurlton, son and heir of Thomas Hurlton, Thomas Smyth, mercer, and Richard Hockenhall, baker, in this the 4th year of his term. Sum £24."

These meagre details, and dry records of rights long passed away, may enable us, when taken in connection with other "signs of the times," to cast a look back for some centuries and divine, with some degree of certainty, what have been

the changes, not only in the fishery of the Dee and the manner of taking the fish, but in the very character of the river itself. It seems probable that the natural state of the river formerly provided much more efficiently for the propagation and preservation of the fish than the most stringent laws, or the heaviest penalties, can do now. It is only within the last two centuries that such parts of our country as the Dee traverses between Bala and Bangor Iscoed has been subjected *at all* to artificial drainage. Immense tracts of land which are now drained, ploughed, and growing grain, were then wholly uncultivated; and remained wide districts of bog and moss, with here and there patches of rushy pasture, supporting only a few cattle, wild horses, or sheep. These, like a huge sponge, retained their waters long after the rains fell, constantly feeding the river, and preventing the possibility of those shallow draughts which now follow any continued dry weather, while frequently, when gorged to repletion, they poured forth their overloaded reservoirs in such floods as we read of in the inquiry made by order of Edward I. and carried away nets, mills, and buildings alike. The acts of the poacher were not only unavailing in a river almost constantly full of water, but the same cause rendered the weirs—now for

many weeks of the year absolutely impassable to the salmon—no let or hindrance. With this cause, others operated to protect the fish, making them, if not more abundant in the market, attain a larger size than are now commonly met with. First of all was the rudeness of the tackle, its much greater cost, and the poverty of the people, It was not alone that Robert de Eton, the Abbot of St. Werburgh, or the King's officer, possessed the *privilege* of certain nets and fishings in the Dee; but the people, in whom the possession of nets was illegal, were too poor to transgress the law by acquiring them. Nets in those days must have been comparatively rare and costly; not easily replaced or repaired, and of inferior size and manufacture. Of this we have some evidence in the "Household Book" of Henry VIII. who, in changing his place of residence for a time, was at considerable expense in conveying, apparently, the same nets for the purpose of fishing. There is an entry made on the 19th June, 1530,

"To Robert a Lee, for certayne netts, and for the charges of the cariage of the same about wt the King's grace £4 6s. 4d."

"16 Feby, 1532, pade to Robt a Lee for carrying the King's netts from Waltham to Hownsden, 9s."

"13 May, 1532 to Robt a Lee for certayne netts and for the charges of the carriage of them by the space of one hole year, £5 10s. 0d.

Angling, too, was scarcely a sport; fly-fishing was unknown; and though, from the same minutes of the Household Book, we find record of Henry VIII.'s gratitude to a certain James Tylson, to whom he "paide in rewarde for two angelyng rodde that he brought to the King's Grace to Hampton Co'te, Xs.;" yet we find, from another entry, that his Grace cared so little about the sport himself, that he paid five shillings "to certayne men that fished afore the King's Grace *as he went on hawking.*" In fact, though angling was not unknown in those days, it was scarcely recognised as a sport; and if the peasant, with his rude home-made tackle, occasionally secured a prize in a full-grown fish, it was as one in a thousand; while the young fry were not, as now, the constant prey of the amateur fly-fishers, that are for ever whipping our streams.

The rude style of angling as late as the 14th and 15th centuries, may be gathered from old prints and pictures of that period. The annexed illustration is a fac-simile of a woodcut taken from a tract printed by Wynkyn de Worde, at Westminster, in 1496, small folio, entitled, "The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle." This book is a republication of a work known to the curious as the "Book of St. Albans," printed there in 1486, and written by Dame



Fac-simile, taken from a Woodcut
in Wynkynde Worde's "Treatyse
on Fyshynge with an Angle".



THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MUSEUM OF
COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Julyana Barnes, Prioress of the Nunnery of Sopewell, near St. Albans, a lady of noble family, and celebrated for her learning and accomplishments.* Her remarks are throughout very quaint. Should the angler's sport fail him—

“he, atte the least, hath his holsome walk, and merry at his ease—a sweete ayre of the sweete savoure of the meede floures that makyth him hungry * * * and if the angler take fyshe, surely there is noo man merier than he is in his spyryte. * * * The Barbel is a swete fyshe; but it is a quasy meete, and a perellous for mannys body, and if he be eten rawe (!) he may be cause of manny's dethe, which hath oft be seen * * * * The Carpe is a deyntous fyshe, but there ben but fewe in Englande, and therefore I wryte the lesse of hym.”

It is amusing how all writers on angling, from Dame Berners up to the present time, write of

* Besides this work of Dame Berners and its reprint by Wynkyn de Worde, only three other publications were issued in this country between the introduction of printing and the publication of Isaac Walton, viz: “A booke of fishing with hook and line, and of all other instruments thereunto belonging; made by L.M.; 4to London, 1590, 1596, 1600.” The initials stood for “Leonard Mascall.” “Approved Experiments touching Fishing and Fruit, to be regarded by the Lovers of Angling,” by Mr. John Turner; in quarto, 1600. “Barkers Art of Angling;” printed in 12mo., in 1651, and again, in quarto, 1653.

the art, as though it required an apology—the “*at least* holsome walk,” &c. So with Izaak Walton, whose work may indeed be said to have derived its beauty from the poetry of its apology.

It is difficult to arrive at a general idea of the comparative value of fish in former times, particularly salmon. No doubt the great difference in price at different seasons and in different places, was due partly to the same causes which influenced the fluctuation in prices of other provisions—a liability to change from great abundance to absolute scarcity in quick succession, to which our advanced civilization no longer renders us subject. But still the great variation in the price of fish exceeds all allowance made on that score; nor can we well conceive, though assured by some who have had it orally from their predecessors, that it ever formed part of our Chester apprentice's indentures that he should not be compelled to make more than three meals a week upon salmon.

We find by a MS. existing in the Harleian collection, that in the 28th year of Edward I. “A man was sued for fishing in the King's part below the Bridge (at Chester), and catching 20 salmons, worth 20 marks, and one salmon worth 10 shillings.”* If this was at all a faithful valu-

* Harleian MSS. 2020.

ation, and not rather an estimate of the offence done to Royalty, it would prove that the Dee salmon were in those days not only most valuable as fish, but out of all measure more valuable than other salmon. In the "Rotulus Famigliæ," or King's Household Book for the 18th year of the same reign, we find the following entries:—

"Bought of Roger de Freincourt, for the Lady de Vesci, eight salmon pasties, 3s. 3½d.

"For one salmon, bought of Chigg, 19d."

"For half a salmon, 5d."

"For a salmon and a half, 13d."

"For one salmon, bought of Thomas, 5d."

"For one quarter of a salmon, 12d."

Nor can these prices be considered contemptible when compared with those of other articles in the same account.

"For one quarter of beef, 2s. 6d."

"For 450 eggs, 18d."

"For one calf and a half, 2s. 3d."

"For one hen, 1d."*

* The prices of other fish noticed in this MS. are "One pickarel [or small pike] 18d." a price out of all proportion to their present value. "300 herrings, 23d; 5 sticks of eels, 2d. 8d. (a stick contained 25 eels); 6 gallons of oysters, 3s. 3d.; 4 trouts, 7d.; a *white* herring, 1½d. (the herrings above were probably salted); one cod fish, 5½d." The price paid for lampreys seems out of all proportion, acknowledging even the high estimation in which it was then held; unless the term "one lamprey," meant a dish, or, as it was called, "a bake of lampreys." "2 lampreys, 3s.; one lamprey, 18d.; one lamprey, 1s." &c. It is curious to observe fish, which we now make no use of, mentioned in this MS. as an article of daily consumption. "For one gallon (lagena) of minnows, bought of Mauntell, 13d.;" "for minnows bought of Bukke, 19d."

In 1330, at a feast given at Vale Royal, to celebrate the entrance of Abbot Peter and his Monks, on their new building; among the cost of viands we have "two salmon, 6s."

The earliest market prices of corn and provisions at Chester begin in 1378, and in the course of the following fifty years they fluctuated very greatly.

"1379. A bushell of wheat sold for 6d; a gallon of white wine for 4d.; a fat goose for 2d; a fat pig for 1d."

"1412. By appointment of the Maior, wheat was prised by two bakers and two citizens, at 3s. 6d. per quarter, so that if 4 bushels, as at that time it is thought they had, that was but 10d. at our old bushell, that is, about 3d. our new bushell.

"1437. Wheat sold for 7d. a bushell, being a very dear rate according to that time; so that the poore in Chester and elsewhere, made their bread of peasen vetches and fearn roots."

"1508. A plentiful year of corn; an old bushell of wheat 10."*

An instance of uncertain fluctuation in price occurs in 1586, when on the 6th May wheat was sold for 24s. the old bushel, Rye for 18s. Barley 14s.; and the 2nd Sept. of the same year Wheat for 8s., Rye 6s., Barley 4s.†

Adam Smith calculates that in 1341, being the 16th year of the reign of Edward III., 10d.

* King's Vale Royal. Book ii, 30 et seq. † Ibid, Book ii, 21.

was a reasonable price for a bushel of wheat, and adds—

“Tenpence contained about half an ounce of silver, town weight, and was nearly equal to half-a-crown of our money. Four ounces of silver therefore, equal to six shillings and eightpence of the money of those times, and to near twenty shillings of that of the present, must have been reckoned a moderate price of the quarter of eight bushels.”*

As a guide to the estimation in which salmon was held at a somewhat later date, we may, for the early part of the 16th century recur to the Household Book of Henry the 8th, for money paid “in rewarde” to persons bringing presents of fish, fruit, &c. Some of these rewards were probably regulated in their amount by reference to the persons sending as well as to the present sent; but it is observable that in the case of the salmon noticed, the reward is paid to persons of no note.

“It’m the x daye (December) paid to Master Kingston’s s’v’nt, in rewarde for bringing a present of bake lampreys to the Kings grace. v. s.

It’m the iij daye (March) paid to a s’v’nt of the Abbot of Gloucd, in rewarde for bringing ij bake lampreys. v. s.

“It’m the same daye paid to men of Stanes, in

* ‘Smith’s Wealth of Nations’ Book 1st, chap. xi. It seems that the quarter of 8 bushels was not accepted at Chester.

rewarde for bringing a fresshe salmon to the Kings Grace. xx s.

“It'm the xx day (July) paid to a s'v'nt of Master Treasurer's in rewarde for bringing carpes and bremes to the Kings grace at Oking. iiij s. viij d.

“It'm the same day (28 June, 1531) paid to a servant of the Mayor in London, in rewarde for bringing of a sturgeon to the King's grace at Eltham. xxx s.

“It'm, the xii day October, payde to a servante of my Lord Wardeyne's in rewarde for bringing of a purpesse and carps to calys. x. s.

“It'm, to a servant of Master Gamyge for bringing of a Red dere to the King's grace. xx s.

“It'm payd to my Lady Bolstrode's s'v'nt in reward for bringing A present of Apulles. xx d.

“It'm, pade to a s'v'nt of the Prior of Lanthony, for bringing carpes to the King's grace.

“It'm the same daye paide by the King's comãundt. to Michell Pylleson, that gave an Angle redde unto the Kyng's grace at Grafton. xv s.

“Paid to a s'rv'nt of Byrches in reward for bringing a present of peches to the King. iiij s. viij d.

How far we can trust any of these items, as being fair indications of value received, rather than of the King's caprice, and his estimation of the parties gratified, we are led to doubt when we notice such items as the following :—

“It'm the xviiij daye, to Edmonde the foteman, for so moche by him gyvn in reward at Asshrige to one that made the dogges to draw water iiij s. viij d.

"It'm the ij day (June, 1532) to one Dompier Peter Tremesin, that did ryde ij horses at ones, by way of reward C crowns" (One hundred crowns or £24 6s. 8d. of that time.)

"It'm the iij daye pade to one Davy *w^t a slyt nose*, by way of rewarde, x s.

By an indenture dated the 6th September in the 4th year of Henry the eighth (1509) the then abbot of Chester, John Birchenshaw, authorised Richard Grosvenor

"to make and attach a weyre or fish yard in the water of Dee, upon the soyle and ground of his convent, and also to make a little howse on the sayd ground, for the safe keeping of the fish and netts of the said Richard, &c. together with all the tenth of fish that shall happen to be taken in the said fish yard and weyre, except of Pike, Tench, and Breame, for the annual rent of 25 shillings; that is, to witt, for the sayd attachment and house, 20d; and for the sayd Teythe fish, 22s."*

In the reign of Edward the sixth, the rights of the crown (derived from the Prince of Wales as Earl of Chester) to the Dee Mills, and the Fishery attached were surrendered by the King to the Cotton family, in exchange for estates in Lincolnshire, and were purchased of that family in 1587 by T. Gamul, subject to a reserved, rent of £100 a year, (subsequently redeemed) from whose descendants they passed, by purchase, to the present proprietors.

* Harleian MSS, 2022.

Early in the reign of James the first, there was a very angry contest between some of the Citizens of Chester, and others representing the rights of the Dee Mills, and the weirs at Chester and Eaton, as well as an obstruction at Holt Bridge. A commission called the "Commission of Sewers," held sittings at Chester, Holt, Flint, and Wrexham, respecting the legality of these obstructions, and the damage they did to the river, and consequently to the commerce of the neighbourhood. The proceedings of this commission were characterized by a very violent partial spirit of self-interest, and became divided into two parties, the one side headed by the Gamulls, who owned the Dee Mills, and had attempted to coerce the citizens into grinding all their corn at these mills, and the other by Sir I. Trevor and a party in Wales, who were said to be influenced by their holding mills on the Flintshire shore, to desire the destruction of those at Chester. A protest addressed to the Lord Treasurer, shews that this latter party proceeded so violently and unconstitutionally, that fears were entertained of a popular tumult and collision between the people and the Welsh, which might lead to fatal consequences, and renew animosities of ancient date.*

* Harleian MSS.

These contests were put an end to in 1639 by the Lords Chief Justices declaring to the Lords of the Privy Council their opinion, that the authority of the Commission of Sewers did not extend to such ancient mills and causeways as existed prior to the reign of Edward the First. The Mills and Causeway were again attacked in the time of the Commonwealth, (probably because the Gamulls were distinguished Royalists); and an order was made in the year 1645 to demolish the Mills, and build new ones on the Roodee, but it was never acted upon; nor from that time until very recently, has the question of altering the Causeway ever been mooted.

We have no mention made of any rights of fishing in the Dee at Chester, either as stalls or otherwise, after the Reformation, with the exception of the Cage, which yet exists, and which passed with the Dee Mills, to the Cottons, in the reign of Edward the 6th; and has appeared ever since to accompany the demise of that property. It is now leased by Mr. Edward Topham, who re-lets it.

In 1693 a London Company established a salmon fishery at Eaton, by lease from the Grosvenor family; but the Eaton Weir is now pulled down, and the Dee (with the exception of the Cage at Chester) is a free river, subject

only to the laws of the country, as regards the taking of salmon in certain seasons, with nets of a certain construction.

By an act passed in the reign of George I. for the better preservation of the salmon throughout the kingdom, the Dee was thought of sufficient importance to be among the number of those rivers mentioned by name, to which the act was intended specially to apply. A few years ago the provisions of this act, and of others subsequently passed, had been so infringed, and the salmon illegally destroyed to such an extent, that an association was formed at Chester to enforce the law, and make such improvements in the river as might enable the fish more easily to ascend and breed in their favourite haunts. An increasing abundance of fish within the space of two years gave testimony to the value of this association; and even the fishermen, who at first bitterly opposed its operations, acknowledged its utility, and lent their aid to its furtherance. Unfortunately, jealousies arose from various causes, and the association having exceeded its means, and crippled by want of unanimity, was, after having been long principally supported by the energy and exertions of the individual who originated it, obliged to be broken up,

The association was re-organised in 1852; its

committee being composed chiefly of the same persons; and having the experience of former failure, with full cognizance of the causes to guide them, will, it is to be hoped, be enabled to prosecute the proper and lawful preservation of the River Dee Fishery, with better success.

Chapter III.

DO return to our native of the Dee, and pursue what may be deemed, perhaps, a monotonous biography.

We will resume his narrative at a later period of his existence: we will suppose that his first sojourn in salt water has long been over—that he has returned to the Dee more than once, and escaping all perils which awaited him by the way, he has again and again been successful in his essay to reach the ocean. We will even, if you please, stretch our elastic imagination so far as to believe, if possible, that he has been taken in a stake net, on the estuary, and has been hastily released by the Flintshire or Cheshire owner, from fear of the consequences! or that enclosed in the net of a Cheshire fisherman his captor has magnanimously returned him to the river, as being within

the statute length of eighteen inches ! We will strive to yield to the hypothesis, that any such very possible mischance may have befallen him, as to fall into such hands, and yet be again set free, and allowed under the protection of the law, to increase in substance, until we now behold him, in the fifth year of his existence, a noble salmon, of some twelve or fourteen pounds weight ; returning to his native river, intent upon visiting the romantic source of the Dee.

But, in thus resuming the story of his life, we find it difficult to let him speak for himself. Not that he cannot tell us a great deal ;—far from it—only that he cannot tell us half enough ! What does he wot of the daily dangers of his *Deely* life ? If he but knew one half of the nets and pitfalls—the thousand and one snares set for his destruction—the keen, avaricious gaze with which he will be waited for at every bend of the river, watched over every weir, hunted into every pool, or speared at in every shallow—would he, despite his strong instinct and irresistible impulse to return,—would he ever again venture to the scenes of his early youth ?

Alas, poor *Salmo*, such is thy fate ! The instinct and impulse are stronger even than the love of life. Return thou must, again and again,—until thy doom is accomplished ; whether taken

fairly in open day by the lawful two and a half inch mesh, or dragged out furtively on a moonlight morning by some poaching scoundrel with a net that would take a gudgeon; whether submitting reluctantly, after a long and gallant struggle, to the skill and science of an experienced flyfisher; or speared, in some remote glen, in the dead of night by the blaze of torchlight: still thy doom at last must come; thou art *not* "food for fishes!"

But so it is: as with man, so with the salmon. Futurity is veiled from his view; nor wots he even one tithe of the dangers already escaped, far less those that await him. We will, therefore, accompany our salmon, in the fifth year of his migration, over some part of his course, ere we again take leave of him.

And here we are compelled to plead a "hiatus." We know not where our native of the Dee has spent his last few months. That he has been laving his glittering sides in the briny waters of the sea, feeding voraciously on the abundance of its more diminutive inhabitants, and making marvellous progress in growth and weight, we know; but very little else, as yet, we do know; except that we can tell certain parts of the deep which, most assuredly, he has *not* visited. He has never

been in the great *depths* of the ocean; his organization would not allow it; it would be as impossible for him to exist there as it would be for man to breathe in the more exalted heights of ether. Consequently, his favourite haunts are all coastwise; and if he ever crosses the ocean at all, it must be within a certain depth, and probably in great haste. But whether he has been a trip to Norway, a short visit to the Mediterranean, or a more daring excursion to America, he is now returning to the Dee; not direct from the vast expanses of the Atlantic, nor even from the midway course of the Irish Sea, but rolling over the more shallow banks of the neighbouring coast; either disporting himself along the Flintshire shore, taking a look at the bathers at Rhyl, just startled by a railway train rushing over his head, as he is dosing at the mouth of the Foryd; or else, keeping close to the opposite coast, he has looked into every bay and inlet in Lancashire; and is able to tell Ptolemy, that he left out of his boasted map, the mouth of one great river that flows between the Dee and the Ribble!

Pray let us pay him but ordinary politeness; let us meet him at the threshold; welcome him at the Point of Ayr; bow him up the estuary, and see him safe over the causeway.

The Chester Causeway! What a wonderful thing it is that a salmon should ever leap the Causeway?

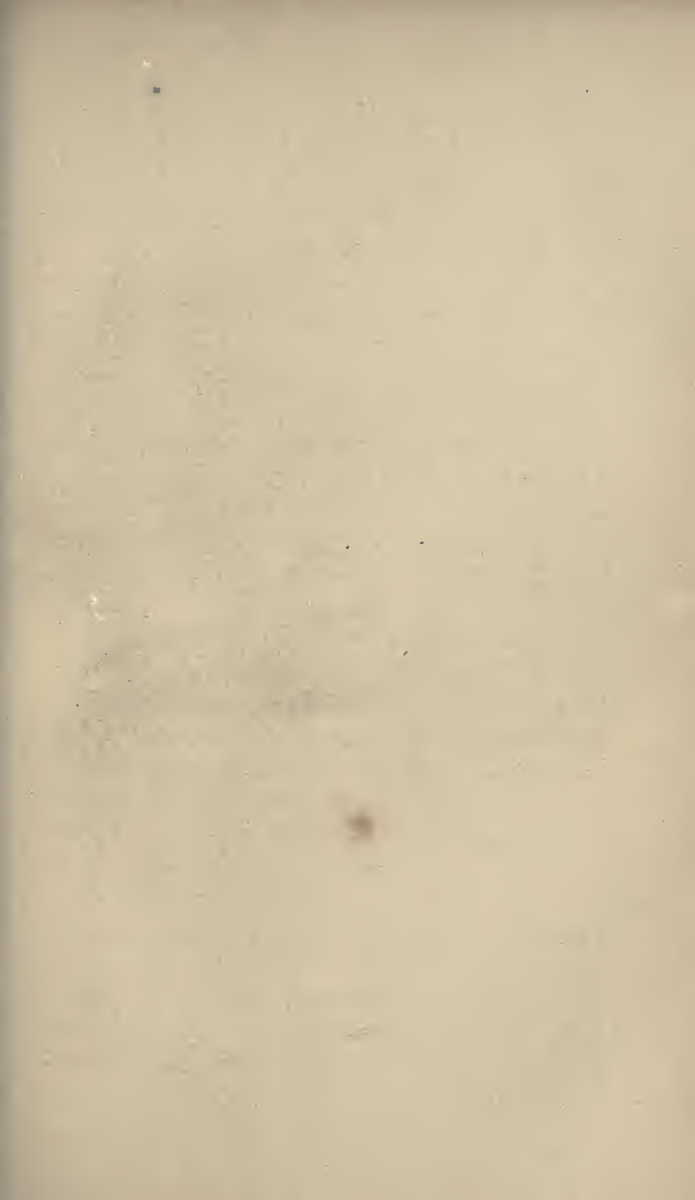
“Wonderful? Why? what’s the causeway to a salmon? Is it not their nature to leap? Besides, look at Chester Causeway, what is it after all? Why a trout could jump it easy, let alone a ‘salmo salar.’”

Wait a moment, my good sir: “bide a wee,” as our neighbours say. In the meantime we will not talk just now about the Chester Causeway; but remember that we are going to give our friend the meeting at the point of Ayr. He is making his way along the wide estuary, intending, no doubt, to call at Parkgate or Flint by the way. But he is too late this tide: the ebb is far advanced, and the receding waters warn him of sundry spreading sandbanks which increase rapidly in extent, and he very wisely wends his way into the secure deeps of Dawpool, there to repose till the morrow.

While he lies there let us take a look at this wide waste of sands, stretching across for some three or four miles between that long low line of white houses, videlicet, Parkgate; and the grey crumbling mass of masonry, scarcely distinguishable in the distance from the green

hills which rise behind it, but which we know to be Flint Castle, on the other.

The sands are yet wet with the receding tide, and reflect the rays of the setting sun too powerfully to allow us to look steadfastly at them, or to distinguish them from the water; indeed, but for those dots moving along about two miles off, with their reflected dots moving under them,—which might be beetles, but which we know to be some of the fairest of their sex, engaged in the pursuit of shrimping,—those shallow waters might conceal the illimitable depths of ocean: but they too (the shoals, not the ladies) will soon be dry, and then we shall be able to examine the bed of the river more deliberately. And first, what are those long dark streaks, stretching from the very beach,—where the nurses are sitting under parasols, and the children are picking up pebbles—down into that narrow devious thread of water, which wanders from side to side of the desert-like mazy estuary, and betrays the current of the river? See there are more of them further on! Some from the opposite side, too, coming across as though to meet them! Yet again another, and another! and another! as far as the eye can reach; ragged black lines, with here and there a pole sticking up, and a bush on the top of it.





Those, oh, ingenuous reader! are part of the perils that await our friend, when the rising tide tempts him to quit Dawpool, in the early grey of morning. They are stake nets, fixed by upright poles in the sandbanks, and ready to entangle in their wide spreading embrace, all that the current of the advancing or receding tide shall bring into them. They are pre-eminently illegal, being condemned by two or three particular acts of parliament, and having here in this river Dee, one special act levelled at them, called the "Point of Ayr Act."

"Do they destroy the salmon?"

Let us ask that weather-beaten old fellow, with a purple wizened face, a red nose, and a jacket that once was blue, but whose darns and patches of various hues now all assimilate pretty much to the tone of the mud on the bottom of that up-turned cobble boat on which he is seated.

"Salmon Sir!" taking his short black pipe from his lips, and rejoicing the thirsty shore with the usual *sequitur*. "Salmon? Lord, Sir, no such luck! Besides, you see, it ai'nt lawful: we never takes no salmon in the Dee, not with meshes like *them*; flukes and sprats, you see, and sometimes a trifle o' herrings. Nothin else to talk on."

"Well, but my good friend, supposing a

salmon *were* to get into those meshes? For I suppose you don't warn them off; do you?

"Bless your heart, sir! don't you believe all you hears; them Chester fishermen as comes down here a layin hinformations, and a swearing agin huz; they'll say hanny thin. They're a pack of the lyingest rascally poachers as ever was! Ony let me an another or two ketch'em down here again, on hanny sich dirty arrands!"

The consequences left to the imagination, the pause filled up with another tremendous *squirt* and the pipe resumed; to which we will leave him.

"Well, but I should like to know what the Chester fishermen do say?"

"Why they *do* say, that, *of* course, these stake nets are about the most destructive engines the salmon have to encounter. That they themselves have not a chance of getting any fish, so long as they are permitted to exist; they say, that the people 'down the river' kill every man jack of them, and are, moreover, (returning the compliment of our friend above,) 'a pack of, &c., &c.,' leaving you, at the same time, to infer that they themselves are a family of the most upright, conscientious, irreproachable fishermen that have ever existed since the days of St. Peter. That they would not take a salmon under size, nor

cast a net in the fence months, "no! not if they was go to the workhouse first!"

You may believe all, or one half, or one quarter of all that, if you like; but seeing that after many years' deliberation, the Legislature, from the days of the Edwards, has thought these stake nets so destructive as to justify more stringent measures against them, with a view to prevent the breed of salmon from being entirely destroyed, and has since seen no cause to change its opinion; seeing, also, that a salmon is not likely to escape a net simply because its meshes are illegal; and that once taken, dead fish tell no tales, (at least not often) we must come, I think, to the conclusion, that salmon *are* taken by these stake nets, and when taken, fetch as high a price in the market as unsmuggled fish do.

"Then why are they allowed to continue? are not the laws strong enough?"

"Oh, abundantly strong enough, if they were put in force; but, as in everything else, what is everybody's business is nobody's business, and so they have never or rarely been acted up to. Let us hope they may; for to tell you the truth I consider our friend's chance a poor one of running that gauntlet of stake nets harmless; and if he has fifty fellow companions with him in Dawpool to-night—we may wait a long day

to welcome any ten of them alive at Dee Bridge to-morrow."

But now we will suppose, if you please, that our salmon has recruited his strength by a night's repose in Dawpool, and that you have passed quite as refreshing a one at the Royal Hotel at Chester—and have no objection to reply to the call of the 'boots,' as he pushes a candle inside your room door, at 3 o'clock a.m.; that you accordingly rouse up to a cup of coffee, and are off by the early Holyhead train to Queen's Ferry, some seven miles down the river. Day breaks as you arrive at the station: we take our way to the river side there to cross by the Ferry boat (scot free, 'tis a royal ferry) with the intention of walking along the embankment back to Chester to a regular good Scotch breakfast.

'Tis a beautiful April morning. A strong south-west breeze comes steadily up the river, bringing along the flood-tide the Flint and Bagillt boats, with their cargoes of fish and market women, curling the surface of the river with a fine wavy ripple, that makes you dream of throwing a fly upon some Irish river. 'Tis of no use here; the salmon are never known to rise until they have reached the streams far above Chester.'

How different the river here, to what we saw it last evening some six miles lower down! No longer a wide shallow estuary some miles in breadth, making no account of a mile's difference or so, here and there; but confined between two high, artificial, unpicturesquely straight banks, with a uninteresting Dutch-looking channel—of about a breadth across which you suspect you might chuck a half-crown or a penny piece; if you were to try, perhaps you would find yourself mistaken.

And our friend *Salmo*; is he up and stirring yet? I should not wonder. But take your stand, now that we have at length arrived at a bend in the straight *canal* of a river: look down towards Flint; your eye can see for nearly three miles along a reach as straight as the road between Paris and Dijon: and up the other way you can look far enough to want a telescope. What do we notice? A number of artificial jettys, formed of loose quarried stones, running out into the current of the river, on each side, at regular intervals of some hundred yards apart. Those are the precious expedient of some defunct engineer (peace be to his manes!) to deepen the bed of the river; and, as you see, the sole result has been to arrest the sand both ways, so that each shore describes a series of bays from point

to point between the jettys. But is that all? Ah! there's a boat shooting out from one of those piers; lower down another, farther still another; and up the river too: and each boat pays off its stern, as it skims along, a heap of net, a line attached to which is left in the hands of a fisherman ashore, while the advancing boat drops into the water a large semicircle of dancing corks, enclosing the entire breadth of the river from point to point, which the boat soon reaches: the rower jumps ashore and hastily assists his fellow in hauling in the net; it takes them a good fifteen minutes ere they get the wide semicircle diminished to the compass of a moderate sized table cloth; then gingerly and cautiously they draw the remaining 'purse' ashore, anxiously looking for the troubled waters—the indignant splash, which would betray the presence of a worthy captive; but no! our salmon is not there this time. We will leave them to prepare their net again, and walk on towards Chester.

This, now, is legal fishing; and very hard work it is. These are legal nets, of two and a half inch mesh, and some two hundred yards long. They cannot, you see—what with rowing, hauling in, preparing their nets afresh, and freeing them from thorns and rubbish—make a cast

above once in three-quarters of an hour; and often throw their nets from daylight till sunset, and never see a fish. But, then, that is because the fish are not so plentiful as they ought to be; and can you wonder? You will not find a hundred yards of the river, in your seven miles walk this morning, that is not drawn once, sometimes more than once, every tide. In fact, these nets sweep the whole course of the river, from Connah's Quay up to Chester; and fortunate will our friend *Salmo* be if he escapes them all.

"Do these men never fish with illegal nets?"

"Well, Buckley, the river constable, says they do, when they are sure there is no one on the look out: but he, *they* say, is a very prejudiced person; and not at all to be trusted. After all, they are a very hardy, industrious set of men; sadly wanting in prudence, living jovially when the take is good, and starving under a reverse."

"So now, friend sceptic—who, some few pages back, was unwilling to allow any sporting salmon making more than a sporting leap of Chester Causeway—do you still dispute the wonder that a salmon ever *does* jump it; in fact, that he ever gets there to try?"

"But, stop; he is not quite there yet. Here he comes though!"

It is scarce twelve hours since he left Daw-

pool, and he is up with the morning's tide. He has not an idea of the dangers he has escaped by the way. The very meshes of the net may have touched his sides, and startled him into an impetuous rush, which luckily was on the right side of the fence, or he had now been on his way to Chester Market. But he is all unconscious; the straight bare channel, with its even sandy bottom and unsheltered course, has had no charms to delay him; so he has come right away, through a host of dangers; over some stake nets, under or just outside others, until the shady heights of Curzon Park tempted him to linger awhile.

And now he has entered on, and is unwittingly pausing in the most dangerous part of his career. He has not been in so great peril since he left the ocean, as awaits him in the last few hundred yards below the Causeway.

Look at the pool below the old Chester Bridge; once forming part of what was called the "Kynge's Pole," and reserved as a royal domain. Net after net is thrown; no sooner has one boat made a cast than another follows; it seems hardly possible the salmon should ever escape them, and yet they do, and by scores, as you will find if you take a trip up to Overton, and visit the Weir at Erbistock. And our special friend,



whom we are so anxious to introduce to a quiet haven above the Causeway, is lying in a sheltered hole, luckily just a couple of feet below the sweep of the nets, apparently deliberating which portal to take of the many that invite him.

“ You know the Old Chester Bridge ? ”

“ No ! Then just let me tell you, you must not imagine a handsome structure, thrown from shore to shore in one bold arch, like its modern prototype, nor yet a regular design, the work of a single architect. Picturesque and irregular, it bears evidence of the changes which different eras, for many centuries past, have wrought in its fabric, and of the still remaining character which originally distinguished it. The tower which guarded its approach on the Welsh side is gone ; but the site has not been altogether abandoned by more modern builders, and the arches of the bridge (of a style belonging to the time of the Edwards) spring from among buildings which appear still to form part of, though no longer upon it. These arches are all of them irregular in size and shape ; and on arriving at the Chester side, we find the Dee Mills yet, as of old, occupying the last two arches of the bridge, under which the principal current of the river flows, and which, after having served the purpose of the

mill, rushes out of three low vomitories to unite with the parent stream below. Up these arches many a salmon looks, and undeterred by the dark subterranean aspect of the path, or the awful hubbub and clatter of the wheels—unconscious of that dangerous illegal net hanging close to the mill-wheel waiting to catch him as he falls back after a mad impotent leap in the dark abyss—many a poor salmon essays that Styx-like passage, and some they even say successfully.”

But our friend essays it not. He is about to quit his resting place and betake himself to the safer stream which flows unimpeded through the centre arch of the bridge. And fortunately for him there is plenty of water in the river; for here he comes, steadily and boldly up the centre of the stream: he has passed the bridge; and *now* he is trespassing on private property!

He knows it not—he is quite ignorant that by going into that pool he has given himself away! disposed of all right and title to his own fish and blood—forfeited his freedom, and belongs absolutely, body and roe, to Mr. Topham, his heirs or assigns! and that if any other man presume to take him out of that pool, the only food he would afford, would be food for the lawyers.

Then we shall not see poor *Salmo* safe after all! He has got into the cage!

Not into the cage exactly, but into the pool belonging to it; and out of that pool there is sometimes only one way,—that is, into the cage itself; sometimes there are two; never more than three. To day, as the river is full, and the lawful sluice, (only eighteen inches wide), not unlawfully dammed up, he has his choice of the three. He can either make his way through the said sluice on the one hand, and by a vigorous effort, such as no one unacquainted with the powerful rush of a salmon could believe possible, he can force his way through the half open flood gates, and undeterred by any such fears as affected Sancho Panza, he can pass under the very wheels of the fulling mill into the river above. Or he can leave both sluice and cage to his right, and urging his way between the two piers up the current of water which foams between them, he may finally make the only safe leap that is left him. Or, he may yield to the most inviting and probable theory "*in medio tutissimus*," and tempted by the greater body of water which with that object is generally allowed to pass through the cage itself, he may venture under the grating of that little building erected

on the middle pier, and be to-morrow on the table of some Chester alderman !

Here for a while we will leave him, trusting that Mr. E. Topham and his men will not cast a net in the pool till he has decided which of the three courses he will take.

Chapter IV.

WE have now an acknowledgment to make and a secret to tell respecting our hero, who is still waiting below Chester Causeway, which may fully account for the length of time he has been detained there, instead of rushing headlong up the torrent, as perhaps he would have done a year or two ago. We trust we shall not be taxed with indiscretion in having so long kept secret, what we well knew must sooner or later be published, or with want of tact and '*savoir faire*' in our manner of declaring it. The fact is, we were reluctant to run the risk of forfeiting some degree of that interest which we flattered ourselves our hero might have obtained during the preceding chapters, in the breasts of that fair portion of our readers to whom, as it were, we instinctively address ourselves; and we hesitated to announce the change which a few short

months had made in the position and habits of the gentleman alluded to.

To be brief—he is no longer a bachelor! As poor Jenks said, ‘he is another’s!’ Inconvenient, however, as may be the avowal, we find that we really cannot get along any farther without making it, and are therefore obliged to acknowledge the engagement he has entered into, at the risk of having our tale laid aside, as already too long!

Look at him now: still in the ‘Kynge’s Pole,’ hesitating between one passage and another, as was not his former wont, and recognize the cause in that fair form around which he so constantly hovers, ready it would seem to share her fate, whatever it may be, reconnoitring every portion of the contemplated leap with an anxious care, which contrasts strangely with the rash temerity of his early years; evidently calculating, not his own powers for the assault, but hers, to whose side he ever again returns from each enquiring sally.

’Tis well that what *we* see so distinctly, the water hides from other eyes, however eager! Two such prizes as himself and his beautiful mate are seldom to be taken with one sweep of the net!

Well, we are in the humour to be confidential,

so we may as well tell the whole truth. A word in your ear about this fair companion !

* * * * *

“Is it possible !—you don’t say so !”

“Quite true, I assure you, my dear madam !”

* * * * *

“And, pray, how long may she be likely—to—a-hem !—to continue in that interesting state ?”

“Why, that is impossible exactly to say, Madam ; these things, as you must be aware, are in all cases somewhat uncertain. *Mister Salmo*, I believe, has some thoughts of reaching a certain shallow gravelly bed in the river near Corwen, over which he disported himself in his early days, and to which reference was made in our opening chapter. *Mistress Salmo* is equally anxious to arrive there ; but you may observe, my dear Madam, a certain *enbonpoint* rotundity of contour about her figure, which however graceful, bespeaks a frame less equal to long continued and powerful exertion than that of her more active partner, and affords quite sufficient cause for that amiable anxiety on his part, which we have both been admiring.”

But look ! there are symptoms of a decided move at last ! Yes, they have determined on their course, and our friend’s careful survey and

innate sagacity have decided him on the right one. He goes first, with a steady but vigorous effort forcing his way up the very centre of the turbulent stream that rushes between the two piers. He is right under the cataract! A moment's pause—a poising of his elegant frame at the very bottom of the pool beneath the fall—and then, suddenly, a quivering powerful stroke from his expanded tail,—and that man fishing on the bank of the river sees him as well as ourselves, sees him, however, only for a moment—a dark form amid the white flakes of the waterfall—and he is again lost to his view in the quiet deep water above the causeway, where he pauses to take breath, and wait for his expected partner.

She is not long following him. Profiting by his experience, she essays the same passage, and to all appearance—notwithstanding her more weighty figure—with equal power. The dark green back of a salmon is again seen for a moment, suspended as it were, among the glittering spray, and she is with her mate, having overcome one more peril on the way to Corwen.

Well may they exhilarate in a sense of conscious security! They may now follow the devious windings of the tranquil river for miles above Chester Causeway and encounter neither snare or obstacle; neither net nor weir; neither

the open attack of the fisherman nor the midnight pursuit of the poacher are to be feared in this part of the river; its bed and its banks being so deep and inaccessible, as to afford ample protection against any art, save that of the honest angler.

Is it in joyous consciousness and triumph, then, that *Salmo* and his fair companion occasionally make such sudden and vigorous leaps from the water? springing sometimes their whole length out of the river, and alighting again with a splash that alarms all the small fry in the neighbourhood! Partly, perhaps, it may be attributed to the exhilaration produced by a return to fresh water, and the reminiscences thereby awakened; but there is also a physical cause for these repeated essays.* They are troubled by numbers of insects adhering to their otherwise glittering scales—which have attacked them during their sojourn in salt water—and to which ichthyologists have given a name, which politeness prevents our repeating! Should their persecutions be as annoying to the salmon as those of their synonyms are supposed to be to

* The writer once found a very fine salmon, laying dead in the bottom of a boat, moored just above the Causeway;—having no doubt fallen into it after making one of these somersaults.

the human race, we cannot wonder that our friends are so anxious to shake off their acquaintance. And this they will probably succeed in doing before they are far past the princely domain of Eaton.

It would be far too tedious a task to follow them through all their long and devious journey; we will, therefore, precede them a few miles, leaving them to follow the tortuous course of the winding river, while we take a hasty look at the principal difficulties which still intervene between themselves and their ultimate destination.

The first occurs immediately above Overton Bridge, in Flintshire—by land, a distance of fifteen miles from Chester; but by the river “by'r lady!” more likely sixty.

And here, let us observe, how entirely the character of the river has again changed, since we left it at Chester. No longer a deep channel confined between two equal banks, flowing evenly and gently on with a current so slow and equable that the minute hand of St. Paul's clock might almost be as easily detected in its progress; on the contrary, it has now become a series of streams and pools, wandering from side to side of its channel; now fretting and chafing through straitened rocky passages, or rippling gently over a wide-spread gravel bed; sometimes hurry-

ing in broken torrents, which glitter in the open sunshine; or anon lingering under the deep shadows of an overhanging wood, and seeming to delight in reflecting the mazy depths of foliage, ere yet it glides onwards.

In short, it skills not attempting with pen and ink to paint the beauties and varieties of a fly-fishing river, such as the Dee has here become. From hence, through the silent shadowy park of Wynnstay—past the foaming rocky rapids of Llangollen—along the course of that beautiful valley, from the darkness of whose overhanging cliffs has been derived the name of the river*—up to the very lake Tegid, from which it issues, and through whose broad expanse of waters, by a fabled license, it is supposed to find its way unmingled,—the “Sacred Dee” presents a series of beauties and charms, such as the ardent lover and frequenter of romantic scenery may well imagine; which would indeed delight the artist for months, but which wholly set at defiance the pen of the writer.

The fly-fisher, if he were with us in reality, instead of accompanying us imagination, would we suspect be apt to run restive, and putting his four joint rod together, would tell us very politely

* *Dhu* (pronounced Dee) *black*: Glyn-dwr-dhu, the valley of black water.”

to go to,—hem!—to visit our weirs and cages, &c., by ourselves, as he found the streams here at Overton far more attractive. In fact we ourselves should perhaps find the temptation too powerful to be easily resisted. But as this is only in imagination—and our reader is probably seated in a railway carriage, on his way to the “Hand” at Llangollen; or better still, reclining in an easy chair at the said “Hand,” his heavy wading boots thrown aside for slippers, luxuriating over a cigar, after a long day spent in the river—he may not object to take a look at the two or three other parts of the river to which we have alluded.

Of these, the weir at Erbistock is perhaps the most difficult and dangerous. It is not so much the *height* of this weir as its *slope*, which makes it so insurmountable to the fish; a salmon of any size could easily leap it if it were perpendicular; but its angle is so obtuse, and the consequent length of the fall so great, while at the same time its force is so tremendous, that it is only after many essays any fish get over it; hundreds never do, as is proved by the numbers that swarm immediately beneath it, and their comparative scarcity in the river above.

We will suppose, now, that it is a fine day in August; there is some fresh in the river: we are standing between the mill-stream at Erbistock and

the open river, on the flood-gate of the sluice which admits the water to the water-wheel of the picturesque old mill at our back; the weir is before us, stretching in an irregular segment of a circle right across the bed of the river, and terminating under the precipitous *scaur* on the opposite side. You see the whole body of water falls over the weir in a continued foaming cataract; there is not a break in it; not a single *run* of more quiet water, through which a fish by vigorous effort might force his way. Jump it they must, and jump the whole distance, or fall short to be hurried back into the pool below. Look at them jumping now! those dark weasel-like objects every moment springing out of the white foam, and again falling into it unavailingly. Those are all *morts*, or young salmon from half a pound to two pounds weight. You may stand by that weir, as we have done, with watch in hand and count something like a hundred leaps in every five minutes; and as these fish are much exhausted by the violent effort, as well, perhaps, as by the fall back again, it has been calculated that the same fish does not leap again for some minutes; so that what we see in the five minutes are all different fish.

There is only one way by which these small fish can succeed in ascending, which is when the

mill-wheel is stopped and the water is suffered to escape by the sluices over which we are standing — always supposing there is no illegal net stretched across its mouth, converting it into a kind of trap, which too often happens. If they remain below, other dangers await them.

Do you see that man at the opposite side, a little lower down the pool, with a thick clumsy rod, by which he casts a line equally heavy and coarse and draws it towards him? At first you would think he was very lawfully fly-fishing, and would only wonder at his ignorance and want of skill, which could expect any fish to rise at a fly so awkwardly cast, and alighting with such a splash upon the water! But your pity for his unartistic endeavours will be converted into indignation, when you are told that he has no such object in contemplation. Instead of a fly, at the end of that line, he has only a small bullet, above which are a dozen or so of naked hooks, at equal distances, and he throws this line at random, in the sole expectation that now and then it may fall over an unfortunate fish, lay hold of some part of his body—when out he is dragged, *vi et armis*!

Is it illegal? and does he know it? Oh, does he not! He knows it well enough; but he calculates that you and I are not informers; or that

he may make his escape ere we could catch him ; or that even if caught and pulled up before a magistrate, he may still by some quip or quirk of the law, evade three months' imprisonment ; at all events he runs the risk, and if you wait to see the quantity of fish he will pull out, you will acknowledge it is worth some risk to run.*

Then if the water were lower you would see knots of ragged urchins, stripped of the little breeches that belong to them, wading among the shallow pools, and groping with their hands under the stones for the unfortunate fish that are still detained there ; or visit the spot at night, and you would find the torch and the spear in full operation. In short, all means, but especially the illegal ones, by which the poor fish can be taken, are here put in force—and your wonder is again excited, that they are not wholly exterminated.

The weir above this, at Llangollen, differs from it in being a perpendicular one, but equally

* We are happy to be able to state that these gross practices, which were in full force some twelve months ago, may now be spoken of in the past tense, as existing no longer. The efforts of the Association, ably supported by Mr. Peel's approval, and the exertions of Mr. Saulsby and Mr. Warters, have put an end to such wholesale poaching ; and the river is too well watched and staked to allow of its being pursued with impunity.

insurmountable, from its height, by any save large fish; even these are frequently unable to get over; and an artificial run which was made some years ago, was ineffective from want of judgment in its construction. There is one spot however, where a projecting rock collects a pool of water, half way up, and thus affords a sort of step in the ascent; and it is astonishing how soon, after a few trials, the sagacity of the salmon directs them to the spot: often when it is attained they have not strength to keep their footing (?) there, but are washed back from sheer exhaustion; sometimes they are able to maintain their hold, and pause for another spring, which generally places them in safety.*

There is now little to detain them save those arts of poaching common to all parts of the river; the weir above being only five feet high, is just what a moderate hurdle would be to a well-bred hunter; and the one at Llantysilio is even lower than that.

Their principal danger now, is from the nets of the coracle fishers. Two or three of these

* Plans have been made by Mr. Robertson the engineer, to whose able assistance the Association are greatly indebted, to deepen and improve this pool, which will probably be carried into effect before this issues from the press.





men will start together, with their coracles on their backs, in the dusk of evening or else long before daylight, and walk six or seven miles up the river—one of them setting night-lines as they go—their pretext being the pursuit of fly-fishing, which they accordingly resort to when the day is far advanced; in the mean time, with a coracle on each side the river, they sweep most of the long pools with nets of illegal mesh; and if you stumble upon them some time after seven or eight o'clock in the morning, and ask them their success—they have had none! their coracles are empty, and so are their panniers! they can't tell, “no *indeed*,” what is the matter with the fish, they won't rise at all! but their companion is off with the wet net wound *hydropathically* round his body under his coat, and he or his confederate has taken a good weight of fish to the nearest market. If you bid them good morning, and afterwards return and watch the two that remain, with not less caution than you would stalk a deer, you will see them now and then lay down their harmless fly rods, and fur-tively draw from the river, night-line after night-line—they follow the downward course of the river—scarce a line, perhaps, coming to the bank without some booty.

It does not come at all within the scope of our

design to give a natural history of the salmon from his birth to the extent of his possible existence. Our only aim in these few pages has been to paint the dangers which surround that existence, more especially in the River Dee, and if possible to excite some degree of interest in the better management and future preservation of that particular river. We prefer, therefore, not dilating longer on the domestic felicity of our particular "Salmo" and his partner, during that period of their sojourn in the Dee which they are to devote to the safe placing of their future numerous progeny. We have simply to remark, for the information of those who may be ignorant of the fact, that the attachment we have supposed to exist between the two fish, is by no means a fabulous invention. Nature has not imposed on them the task of rearing their young ; but she *has* that of making provision for their future safety till hatched, and it is a matter of authenticity in natural history scarcely unfamiliar to any, how assiduously the male fish attends upon the female with whom he is for the time associated in this duty ; how indefatigably he labours with the horny substance with which Nature has lately provided his jaw in forming a trench in the gravel bed which has at length been selected to receive the spawn, ; how carefully the trench is again

covered up to form a fresh one ; and how long these labours continue, until both fish, exhausted and emaciated by their exertions, become what are called “Kipper,” or unseasonable salmon, quite changed from the elegant rounded form, so gifted with muscular power with which they first entered the river, and display a long lean lank body, with disproportionately large head, and flesh so worthless that none but a poacher would ever pursue them. Unfortunately, however, the poacher does still do so, unless restrained by a seasonable apprehension of the law ; and at no period is the fish more completely in his power. Weak, languid, incapable of any vigorous or continued exertion, the poor sick salmon seeks only the covert of a hole under some friendly root of a tree, or large stone, and lies there for hours, apparently in a half lethargic state, waiting for his strength to be in some measure recruited by complete repose, ere he again commences his journey to the sea. It is easy then to discover him—to ensnare or destroy him : you may net him, or gaff him, or spear him ; his former quick eye, intuitive apprehension, and rapid flight from danger appear to have deserted him ; you may arrive at him with the hand, or even the foot, and once gently stroke his body, he remains as it were paralyzed

and motionless; the fatal gaff hook is slipped quietly under him, struck suddenly into his side, and in a moment he is flapping away his existence in the green meadow, to be either dried for red salmon in the cottager's chimney, or sold for threehalfpence a pound to some neighbouring farmer.

But we have already declared that we do not profess to write *the life* of our salmon; and here we shall for the present take our leave of him, reserving to ourselves the privilege of again, at some future day, recurring to his adventures, should we feel so disposed, and permitting our readers to remain in doubt as to his final destiny—how long, and how often he is to return to his native river.

If we have only made more apparent the numberless dangers that peril every day of his existence—if we have awakened a larger share of interest in his fate—if we have shewn how necessary it is for us to exert the powers the law has provided, in order to rescue his princely species from absolute extermination, and how desirable it is that the means taken should be rendered effective by general and universal support—our end will have been answered.

We are too well aware how much the better preservation of the River Dee is prevented by

that great hindrance to any cause, lukewarmness ; even among those who profess to wish it well. And this lukewarmness springs, as ever, from the usual source, ignorance—ignorance of the importance of the object, and ignorance of the difficulties which lie in the way. If every man who loves to see a salmon in the river, or cares to see one on his table knew how many apparent impossibilities the fish had to encounter ere he could possibly attain a reasonable size, there would be many more than we can boast of, who would think it worth while to assist in doing away with some of those impediments. But with regard to the importance of the subject, most men, are as yet—much as it has been canvassed—entirely blind. The land is racked on every side to support fresh produce : science, art, invention and experience, are alike taxed, to compel the earth to yield double her increase ; and successfully. While the waters, full of prolific life, and capable of sustaining and yielding a tenfold amount, are utterly neglected ; neglected from ignorance of their wealth ; neglected by the selfishly culpable indifference of many who would eagerly grasp at any means of direct profit, but who hesitate to hold out a little finger towards a work of public benefit—however much it may promise an indirect return ; and neglected again,

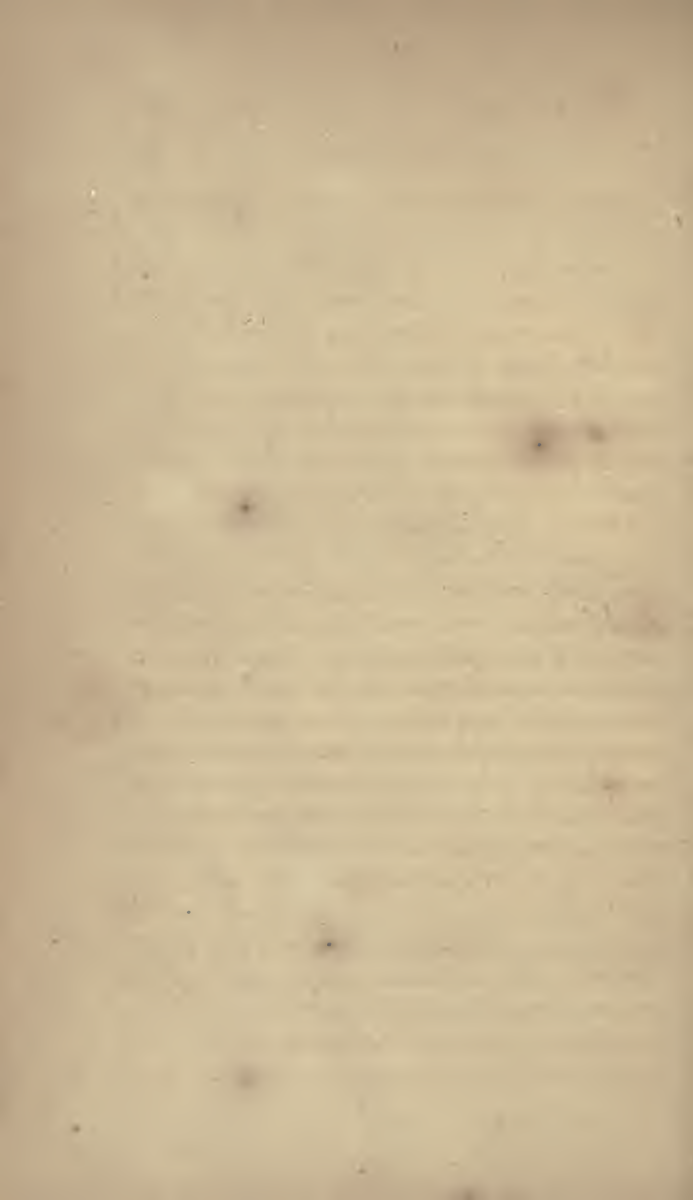
because every scheme which has for its object general results, has to encounter in its progress little jealousies, which peril the undertaking at every turn, and sometimes threaten to disgust even its warmest adherents.

Such were the circumstances under which a former Association for the preservation of the Dee was broken up ; such, we trust, however, will not be the fate of the present one.

Every day that adds to our stock of information relating to the physiology of fish, is opening the eyes of the public to the importance of the subject, and to the fact that its importance is still underrated. Experiments lately made have demonstrated the possibility of making even an unproductive river, by artificial means, a source of absolute wealth ;* and common sense tells us the wisdom of so protecting the fish that Nature has sent us, that they may attain a maturity which shall increase their value fifty-fold, and prevent their indiscriminate destruction, while as yet all but absolutely worthless.

* See a shilling pamphlet on the "Artificial production of Fish," by Piscarius, published by Reeve & Co., which gives an account of what has already been done in France, and a detailed description of the method.

NOTES
FOR
THE FLY-FISHER.



Notes for the Fly-fisher.

THE experienced artist, complete in his tackle, and perfect in his experience, visiting Wales, *not* for the first time, to put in practice the science he has there and elsewhere acquired, will need no instruction from us, either where to look for sport or how to find it; and entertaining a very considerable degree of contempt for "book learning" on this head, it is only at the suggestion of some friends, who think that a few words on the subject, addressed to the tyro in the art, might embrace a considerable number of young anglers visiting Wales for the first time, and to whom some general remarks on the principal object of their visit might be acceptable, that we venture to offer a few hints, touching the stations, flies, &c. &c., more

immediately connected with the Dee, *quantum valeant*.

On the very banks of the river itself are several very good "locations," some of which possess the advantage of having brooks and lakes in the neighbourhood, as well as the fishing in the Dee itself.

Fly-fishing is not much pursued below Overton Bridge. The sport there is very good in the right season,—that is the latter end of July and August, when the Salmon and Sewin have come up, which they do after a flood about that time. The Trout-fishing is but poor here, the river being too full of Dace and Chevin, which, however, afford good sport to young fly-fishers, who are content not to *fly* at higher game. There is a comfortable little roadside inn close to the bridge, very picturesquely situated, and chiefly frequented by anglers.

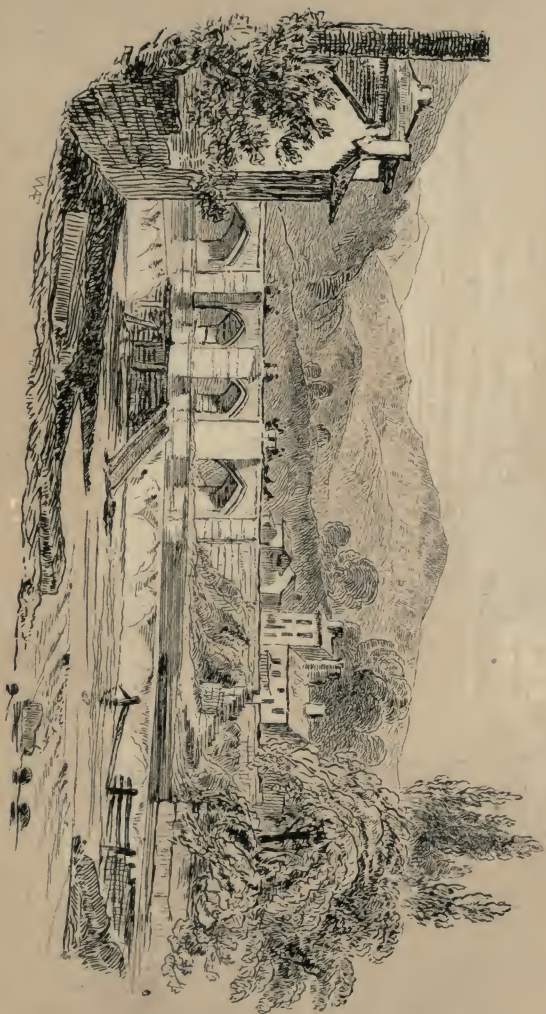
The streams and pools above Wynnstay are very good; but too much whipped by miners, who come down continually with their coracles, by the assistance of which not a hole nor an eddy escapes them. This part of the river is, therefore, seldom visited by amateurs, who generally make the "Hand Hotel," at Llangollen, their first resting-place, and where they do well to remain awhile.

From about a mile below Llangollen up to Bala, no part of the river is unworthy attention; but varying experience leads to various opinions as to the best portions of the river. One day's ground, if you have not time to take a longer range, is to walk up to the Chain Bridge, about two miles distant, and fish back to Llangollen; and we should remark, that with the exception of the streams immediately below Llantysilio Weir, you will have to return about a mile before it will be of much use to throw the fly again, the river being, for nearly that distance, a succession of rocky torrents, difficult of approach, and unsuited for the fly. From Pentreveylin Weir to Llangollen the streams are exceedingly good, and when not over-fished afford good sport. A stretch of a mile or mile and a half higher up, to a farm called Pen-y-dre, puts you in possession of the streams above Llantysilio Weir, which generally afford excellent sport. A five-mile walk, or drive, up to Glyndwrdu, affords still better and more select ground, the streams being admirable, and not so much fished, and you may either fish up or down the river; but anglers coming from Llangollen generally fish down again.

The trout are not large in the Dee; they seldom average a quarter of a pound; but still

you generally get two or three half-pounders—sometimes large fish—and the expectation keeps up the sport. In the spring, till the floods of April or May carry them away, you get abundance of the young smelt or salmon, weighing three or four ounces, which are not bad sport, and most delicious eating—far superior to trout. In the autumn, by putting a sewin fly on for your end fly, you sometimes pick up two or three, which afford the finest sport of all (except a salmon), and wonderfully add to the weight of your basket. The only drawback to the fly-fisher in the Dee, are the long pools in some parts of its course, which often oblige you to walk half a mile between each stream without throwing a fly, and fatigue any except a professed pedestrian. These pools are overhung with wood, very picturesque, but completely inaccessible to the fly-fisher, except with a coracle, which it requires great skill to manage, and which indeed a man ought to be an expert swimmer ever to take a seat in.*

* In the immediate neighbourhood of Llangollen are several brooks, in which, *after rain*, good sport may be had. The chief of these is the Ceirioge; and a very good two or three days' fishing may be had by the following route:—Take the mountain road from Llangollen to Glyn (about two miles), fish up the Ceirioge to Llanarmon (eight miles), walk





Corwen is the next station above Llangollen ; there is an excellent house there, the Owen Glyndwr Hotel. The fishing from Corwen is equally good, both up and down the river, each locality having its partizans ; but to our fancy the streams near Llansaintffraid, three miles below Corwen, are about the best fishing in the Dee. There are also other rivers in the immediate neighbourhood. The Alwen, which joins the Dee about two miles above Corwen, is a small, but very good river, after rain, and when there is sufficient water. The best way to fish it is to take a car up from Corwen to Cerrig-y-druidion, ten miles, and fish the Ceirw, till it falls into the Alwen, and so down to Ty Nant, a distance of about three miles, where the car can meet you. There are, however, two excellent houses at Cerrig-y-druidion, at either of which you will find good accommodation ;

the other three to Llanrhaiadr, and you have then five miles of the finest fishing possible on the Tanat.—N.B.—You must have permission here, as the Tanat is strictly preserved. Two years ago I was much disappointed to find the Tanat much injured by the water from some copper mines, but I understand it is again free from that objection. Besides the Tanat, however, you have at Llanrhaiadr a brook called the Cynlleth, and at Llanfyllin, about three miles distant, the river Cain, in which there is good fishing.

one of them, the "Saracen's Head," is kept by a thorough sportsman, Thomas Jones, always ready, both with his gun and his rod, and knowing every yard of the country. By making Cerrig-y-druidion your station, you get within approach of the Yspsyty and Pentrevoelas rivers, both of which are worthy of a visit. All these small rivers are, however, exceedingly capricious. we have had most excellent sport in them all, and frequently as bad, sometimes without apparent cause; but it is useless to attempt fishing them except after rain.

A few lines from a private journal, kept in 1849, may not be inappropriate, as giving the particulars of a day in that neighbourhood; and though the apothegm with which it commences may smack of conceit, we must say, we still subscribe to it.

"7th May, 1849.—A fly-fisher who knows his vocation, is pretty sure of sport in the Dee.

"Drove over from Ruthin to Cerrig-y-druidion in the evening—intending to fish in the Ceirw the following day.

"8th May.—Up soon after sunrise, and strolled down to the river; found it too low. Ordered out the mare and drove to Yspsyty (8 miles) trusting to accounts of the river there, being in good condition. No such thing; scarce enough

water in the river to wash a table cloth ! What to do ? Gave the mare a feed, and thought the matter over at breakfast. Determined to retrace my steps, and drive to Llansaintffraid, on the Dee (then eighteen miles distant). All this time the day, which did not begin promisingly, looking less propitious. A cold north-west wind, with a driving, dirty, grey sky—"that very ancient grey,"—that looked as if it would rain if the wind would let it. Reached Llansaintffraid a little before one. Almost in doubt whether to be at the trouble of taking the mare out and putting my rod together : what trout would shew his nose above water to such a wind as that ? However, that day was *my own*, the next did not belong to me, so down to the river ; and as I never like to do things by halves, walked right into the river and up to my knees at once—(much the best way—always prevents all future fears about wetting your feet !) To my surprise rose a fish immediately, and though I have had many a better three-hours' sport, yet considering all the circumstances I bragged no little on weighing my fish at Corwen—seven pounds and a half. Driving to dinner from Llansaintffraid to Corwen, passed P——, two of his friends, and the keeper—in all, four rods ; had been at it since nine in the morning, and got amongst

them but five pounds weight. Take it altogether, I don't know a surer river than the Dee: if they won't rise between Bala Pool and Llangollen, they won't rise anywhere."

A favourite station with some anglers is the Druid, about two miles from Corwen, situate on the Holyhead road, and close to the Alwen.

Five miles above Corwen is Llandrillo, which is convenient for anglers preferring that immediate part of the river: there is a comfortable little house of no pretension, where you may have very good accommodation. We must confess we do not prefer this part of the river. The streams are shallower and broader, destitute of the large rocks and stones which are found lower down, and consequently more easily netted, of which two or three most notorious poachers at Cynwyd,* a hamlet in the immediate neighbourhood, have too much availed themselves. Higher up, the character of the river again improves, and by making the "Lion" at Bala one of your stations, you have a variety of fishing seldom offered to the angler at any one spot.

Indeed Bala has become to many whose love of the craft induces them to reside occasionally in Wales, a sort of "head quarters," whence to

* This poaching has lately been put a stop to, by the Association for preserving the River Dee Fishery.

make excursions in any direction. In the first place, that magnificent sheet of water, Llyn Tegid, or, as it is called by the English, "Bala Pool," is the most important lake in Wales, being about four miles in length, and a mile and a half broad. It lies in a sort of basin, towards which the hills descend so gradually, that its banks, though gently picturesque and well wooded, lack the abrupt grandeur of the lakes in more mountainous districts. The fishing is very varied; trout, pike, and perch are to be taken, and, of course, in a variety of ways. Sometimes monsters of each kind are captured;* trout of three or four pounds rise to the fly in favourable weather, and some from seven to ten pounds have been killed lately when trolling for pike.

The fishing for trout or pike, however, depends much on the weather, and the fish are very capricious; but the perch-fishing almost always affords sport, and as the fish average a quarter of pound and sometimes run larger, it is often resorted to

* Pennant mentions one which weighed twenty-five pounds. He also speaks of the gwyniad, or char, as abounding, and mentions one taken which weighed five pounds. (?) These fish have since become very scarce and seldom met with, probably in consequence of the whim of the late Sir Watkin Wynn, who encouraged the pike, and would not suffer that ravenous worthless fish to be destroyed.

when the weather is unfavourable to the former. The trout will rise here in very cold weather. We have known them taken with the fly in December and January with snow on the ground, and snow water in the lake.* Fly-fishing is often pursued from the shore, and some insist that it is very killing. Sir Watkin Williams Wynn has several boats on the lake, one of which may be had by sending a man with your card to Glanllyn, about four miles distant, where the boats are kept, and this difficulty is purposely interposed to prevent the free use of the boats being abused. Several rivers fall into the lake. Certainly they are but brooks, but after rain the sport in all of them is

* On the 15th Jan. 1853, a trout was killed in Bala Pool by Mr. Edwards, of Vrongoch, who was fishing from shore. The fish was taken with a small dun fly, and weighed six pounds.—Sir C. Hamilton killed with the fly in May and June 1852, 1185 trout, chiefly in the rivers falling into the lake. The flies with which he killed most were the Gravel fly and February red.—Mr. Edward Whately, who has fished Bala Lake of late years most assiduously, has killed several large fish. In trolling for pike, a few years ago, he hooked and killed after an hour's sport a trout weighing ten pounds and a quarter. At other times he has killed them from four to eleven pounds weight. His nephew and himself, on one occasion, killed from one boat at the same time two pike, the one weighing eight, the other twelve pounds.

often very good, and would be admirable, could the arrangements to prevent netting and preserve them, which have been often attempted, be carried out. The principal ones are the Dee, the Lliw, and the Twrch, which fall into the lake at its head, and the Lafar, whose mouth is at Glanllyn, about two miles lower down. Just on the other side Bala, and falling into the Dee half a mile below the lake, is another, the Trewern, which descends from the mountains between Bala and Festiniog.

Most unfortunate is it that these rivers cannot be properly preserved. As they are, they are so well adapted for preserving and breeding the fish—so defended from the poacher by deep pools and large rocks, that even now, and without any strict preserving, they will afford sport, which if properly looked after would, we have no doubt, be some of the finest in the principality. A club was formed some time since for this purpose ; keepers were appointed and funds raised ; but some few individuals were dissatisfied with the arrangements ; jealousies and heart-burnings took place ; and the attempt was given up. We are sorry to say that subsequently, men, who have not the poacher's apology of necessity to plead, have not been ashamed to rival him in his low pot-hunting propensities, and have braved

public opinion, by sweeping these rivers with their nets in open daylight!

It is singular, in a country such as Wales, how very few fish tackle makers and vendors there are. We cannot call to mind one anywhere except at Bala. Sometimes a shoemaker or a watchmaker exposes a few flies or lines in his windows, but a regular fish tackle maker you will not meet with anywhere, that we are aware of except at Bala. Here, however, is a most excellent one: Griffith Jones, who is also a saddler, and whose shop is exactly opposite the hotel. His stock of flies is always well kept up, and generally made with great judgment; while tackle of every kind, rods, nets, panniers, &c, are to be had of the very best sort, and in great variety. We seldom pass through Bala without refitting some part of our accoutrements, and if we want flies made to pattern, send them to Griffith Jones by post, wherever we may be.

The favourite flies in the Dee are the March Brown, and the Yellow and Blue Duns, with sometimes a Coch-a-byndu as a dropper, or a Red spinner for the tail fly. At times the Yellow dun with a body formed of orange dubbing is the most killing, especially in the streams about Corwen. The best way, however, for a stranger, here and elsewhere, is to appeal to the judgment

of some one well accustomed to the locality. There is always an old fisherman to be found, who will be ready to give his assistance and advice for a trifle ; and, with regard to trout flies, you generally may rely on his judgment. These men can either dress you a fly, or pick out a few sure killing ones from their own stock ; and the niceties of shade and colour necessary for each locality are apt to escape the discrimination of a stranger. In salmon flies we have not such implicit confidence in the *natives* ; they vary with every state of the river ; but if a man *once* kills a salmon with any particular fly, the fly is established for ever in his opinion, though the concurring circumstances which rendered that fly for the time attractive, may never occur again. Take a man's opinion as to the general character of form, size, and colour, which may govern your choice ; but if you have a good assortment of the usual salmon flies, we should prefer using them to any of those which may be offered you as the manufacture of the country. The same remarks apply to the sewin flies.

Having reached so central a position as Bala, a few remarks on the principal fishing stations within a few miles distance, with notes of the writer's "experience," may not be unacceptable.

A mountain road along the banks of the Tre-

weryn takes you to Festiniog, 19 miles. About three miles this side of Festiniog is Llyn Morwynion, celebrated for the beauty of its game and lively fish ; it is, however, a difficult lake to fish, requiring great tact and delicate handling of the rod, as well as in the choice of the fly, and only first rate anglers are able to boast of success there ; the fish, too, are very capricious, and not even the most finished artist can always tempt them to rise. There are other lakes in the neighbourhood, of which I know nothing except by hearsay.

In the river which runs down below Festiniog, past Maentwrog, is the best sewin fishing I ever met with in Wales. It is necessary, however, to be *on the spot* in order to seize the right moment for sallying forth, as it is only after rain that there is any sport ; and the river being short (only about six miles of any body of water) and fed from the precipitous mountains immediately around, the river rises and falls in an unusually short time. It is sometimes too great a flood to fish at one part of the day, and, within twelve hours, too low water to do any good ; but for eight hours out of those twelve the sport is magnificent, being entirely sewin or salmon, from one up to ten or twelve pounds' weight.

I shall never forget my first day's fishing there,



ME.

when sewin fishing was new to me, and when, accompanied by Jack Evans, (one of the most astute poachers and best attendants in the Principality) I hooked and killed, after twenty minutes' fight, a fine salmon, fresh from the salt water. The fish was thrown aside on the gravel bed, while I eagerly essayed a fresh cast; Jack as eagerly watching the fly, and giving his hints as to the most likely parts of the stream; suddenly a cry from the bank attracted our notice—and behold! a great sow, trotting off at the rate of eight miles an hour with the salmon in her beastly jaws! Away went Jack, and away went I after him; we chased her through the meadow, up the lane, past the cottages, whence issued spectators; brooms, spindles, and three-legged stools, flew about her ears to no purpose; such shouting and hilloaing! the whole village was raised; at last, giving her no time to munch it, and being run close, she dropped it without farther damage than the marks her ugly tusks had inflicted on each side of the fish.

To the best of my recollection the fish weighed five pounds and a half; but as I have heard Jack tell the whole story repeatedly since,—as he invariably adds half a pound to the weight of the fish each time he tells it, and as I never contradict

him,—the size of the fish must be something extraordinary by this time.

The trout fishing in this river is worthless ; but there is good sport on a windy day in the pools of the Trawsfynydd river, about three miles above Maentwrog. The “Maentwrog Inn,” kept by B. Lloyd—an ardent sportsman and very good fellow—is as comfortable an hotel as any in Wales.

There is occasionally good sewin fishing in the Mawddach, between Trawsfynydd and Dolgelley ; but it is too much fished. There is the same objection to the Ynion, which flows past Dolgelley ; but large fish are occasionally taken in the lower part of the river ; and higher up, near Drwsynant, about nine miles from Dolgelley, I have had good sport after rain with sewin, all of them under three quarters of a pound weight.

About nine miles from Dolgelley is the lake of Tal-y-llyn, justly celebrated as the best and *surest* water for trout fishing in North Wales. Though familiar by repute to all anglers, and often mentioned in guide books, I have no where met with an attempt to describe its peculiarities, and am therefore induced to speak more at length of it, as a very favourable resort, than I should otherwise have done.

The lake of Tal-y-llyn—the proper name of

which is Llyn-y-myngel, is neither more nor less than a mountain tarn of rather more than ordinary dimensions. The extensive range of mountains which is crowned by Cader Idris, descends abruptly on the south east, into a gorge which is the commencement of a long narrow valley, down which the river Dysynni finds its way to the sea. The lake is a more than usually evident consequence of the laws which geologists recognize wherever a lake exists, and nowhere, perhaps, are the causes more clearly demonstrated, nor could a geologist well find a more apt illustration of the simple axioms by which a lake has been originally formed.

The same convulsive force, probably volcanic, which at a far remote period raised the bare stern granite masses of Cader Idris to the clouds, threw across this narrow valley a mound of rocks (now covered with soil and verdure), which, about two miles down its course, has arrested the current of the streams from the upper valleys, and suffering only one narrow exit to be worn by the waters, keeps them back in the hollow of the valley at a certain level, and forms the lake. So completely does the lake cover all the level ground, that only at its head, where, as usual, the delta formed by the gradually subsiding debris from the mountains has given a few marshy meadows,

is there any flat ground whatever; the mountains rise abruptly from the margin of the lake, and the road by which you approach the inn, is so narrow a thread along its shore, that whenever the lake is pretty full from rain, it is much of it submerged by the encroaching water. On the very shore of the lake, at its lower end, is the inn: occupying the centre of the mound of rocks which form the barrier, is the Church, with a small stone arch thrown across the stream below, and a little whitewashed public-house, of ancient date, called Pen-y-bont, close to the bridge.

Scarcely anything could be more wildly picturesque and striking than every part of this isolated little valley and lake. The mountains rising with such steep abruptness from the very waters, cast a variety of dark reflections upon their surface, which give them an appearance of peculiar depth and effect; the rich green, brown, and purple hues of the heathy hills mingle in the reflections of the water, with an adventitious brilliancy, such as one might attribute to the colouring and imagination of a painter; but vain would be the effort of an artist to stamp upon his canvass one fleeting effect of those thousand varying hues which pass with every cloud over the clefts and gorges, the towering rocks and deep-recesses of the undulating hills, and are

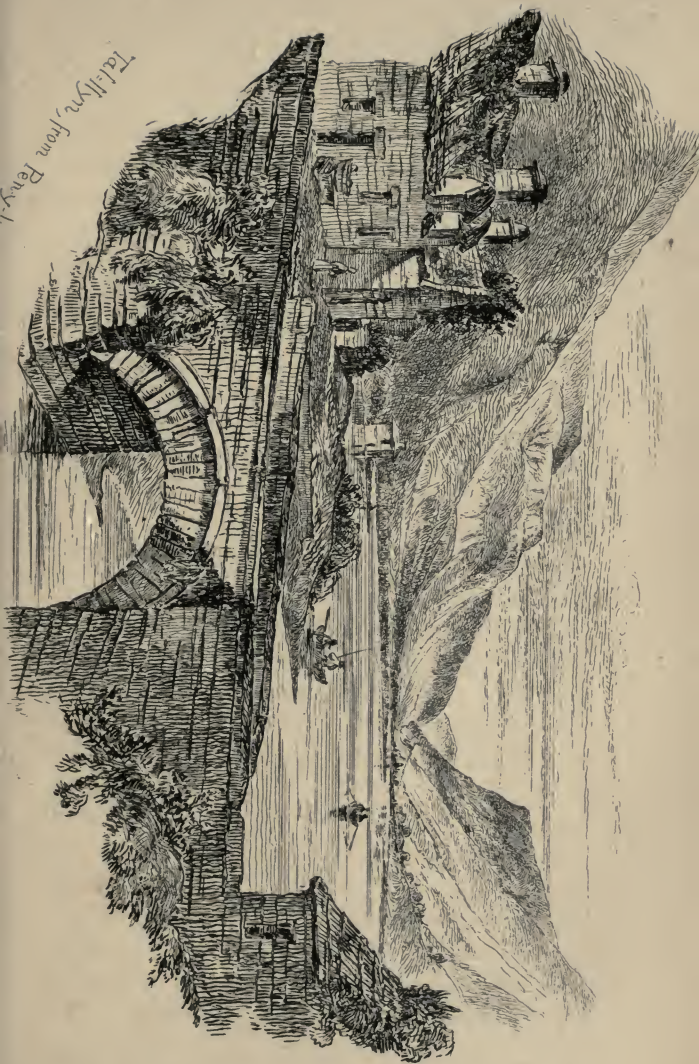
reflected with increased depth and brilliancy in the waters below.

Everything about the lake is in keeping with its wild grandeur of character; the few trees about the inn and church, where alone there is room for trees to grow, add to, instead of taking from the general wild effect; the sound of the Church bell, the halloo of the shepherd or the bark of his dog, condensed as it were in the hollow of the mountains, ring with an echoing reverberation along the waters of the lake, and no other sounds, save the lowing of cattle, the bleating of a stray sheep, or the croak of a solitary raven winging his way high in air above the valley from one range of craggs to the other, disturb the silent solitude of the scene.

The lake is about a mile long, and not much more than a quarter of a mile broad at its widest part. Its mean depth is from eight to twelve feet, except in one part, towards the middle and upper end, which is very deep. This part has been christened "Saharah," or "the Great Desert," from fish being so rarely taken there; and old *habituees* of the lake are apt to indulge in a dry, and not very amiable chuckle, when they see a boat occupied by a couple of "grif-fins" moored in this locality. The water of the lake is beautifully transparent, so that the bottom

may easily be seen when the weather is calm, covered with a long weed which grows most luxuriantly, and contributes no doubt to feed the quantity of fish with which the lake abounds.

Fortunately the fish here are entirely trout; no perch or pike dispute possession of the waters, which in some measure accounts for their abundance. Their average weight is three to the pound, or rather better. Thus I have memoranda of 33 fish weighing $12\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.; 44 fish 13 lbs., &c. The best average for weight was one morning in 1847, when I killed 18 fish, weighing rather over 9 lbs. I have *heard* of trout weighing three or four pounds being taken, but until lately never believed it, as after fishing the lake regularly for ten seasons I never killed or saw a fish that weighed *fully* one pound, until the autumn of 1851, on one day of which I killed one which weighed *exactly* a pound. The same afternoon Mr. Cooke, a gentleman staying at the inn, killed one the same weight; and the next morning I took a third. They all weighed a pound to a feather, or, perhaps, I ought to say, to a *scale*. This same year Mr. Pring, the curate, killed a fish which weighed nearly four pounds; it was, however, a diseased fish; almost dead when he took it, and so rotten that it had to be buried immediately.



Tal-y-llyn, from Pen-y-llyn.



These fish are very game when hooked, and very beautiful fish, generally in fine condition; they are good eating if cooked on the spot, but they will not keep or travel—at least they are flabby and flavourless in such case, which I attribute to the weedy bottom, on which they no doubt feed much. The best way is to have them potted on the spot, and they are then most excellent. They rise only to the fly, disregarding entirely the spinning of the minnow, though I suppose they would take a worm after heavy rains. This is, however, contrary to the rules of the lake, which very properly only allow of fly-fishing; and the minnow I have only tried in order to verify the information I had, that a trout was never known to rise to the minnow in Tal-y-llyn. I trolled one favourable windy day the whole length of the lake, and there might not have been a fish in it, to judge from the utter disregard that was paid to the bait.

I do not profess, in these scattered memoranda, to lecture on the art of fly-fishing—and shall therefore not enter into the question as regards this particular lake. I might, however, be excused for doing so, as I know no place where systems and dogmas as to certain particular flies and the art of using them, are more canvassed and disputed than at Tal-y-llyn. The visitors at

the comfortable little inn there are generally so entirely of one craft, that a sort free-masonry brings them into more intimate and frank intercourse than is usually the case among strangers—and the day over, all, or most, meet to enjoy their glass of wine, or grog, and cigar—when the subject discussed is so invariably the same, in one aspect or another—fly-fishing in general, but especially at Tal-y-llyn—that nowhere do you hear so much fishing lore or fishing anecdote. In particular, there are a few noted men, known as masters of the science; and from long experience of the lake, especially looked up to at Tal-y-llyn; whose style, and practice, and flies, &c., &c., are all quoted and discussed, each one having his admirers, who think every heavy basket is made either by that particular system—or else by a chance which does not deserve it. Very entertaining these discussions are; and no less so, that some let out their opinions very charily, fully believing themselves in possession of secrets which they are not at all willing to make too common. The chief art, however, is at Tal-y-llyn as elsewhere,—particularly in clear water—no *secret*, but skill and science. To fish *fine* and *far off*, is what you may tell in so many words; but how many can do it? At the same time I must acknowledge a nicety and caprice

in the fish with regard to the exact colour and make of the fly, which is common in most lakes—but very remarkable here; a shade of difference in the feather, a bit of tinsel, or different body, is sufficient, often, to render a fly taking or the reverse; and as to what the fly will be—no one knows till the day comes; they are of all sorts. I have found a small March brown, or Grouse, or Partridge hackle, and the Yellow dun, as a general rule, the favourites.

There is at times, after rain in the autumn, excellent sewin fishing in the Dysyni, which runs from the lake to the sea, a distance of about twelve miles. About six miles below Tal-y-llyn, on this river, is a noted rock called the 'Bird rock,' a high beetling cliff, which being inaccessible to beings without wings, is the abode of birds of prey to an incredible extent, in particular of cormorants, who come there to roost in numbers of two or three hundred. Sportsmen frequently make excursions from Tal-y-llyn to the Bird Rock with rifles, to wait the return of these birds in the evening from their distant feeding grounds; and as they come sailing home to their high nests, they afford good sport for ball practice.

High up the mountains, on the ascent to Cader Idris is a small lake, the trout of which

are said to be excellent, and afford good sport *when in the humour*. They are, however, exceedingly capricious : and I have never had a day to throw away in climbing the hills, without any certainty of having sport when I arrived at the spot.

Tal-y-llyn belongs to Sir Robert Vaughan, who built the inn, which is now an exceedingly well conducted comfortable house, though scarcely large enough, during the season, for all who would wish to take up their quarters there. One additional large room as a coffee room, with bed-rooms built over it, would add greatly to the comfort and accommodation of the house ; as it is, many who come there to fish are obliged to put up with very inferior accommodation in the immediate neighbourhood, or drive to Dolgelly or Machynlleth, both of them nine miles distant, for the night.

There are three boats on the lake, all of them the property of Sir Robert Vaughan, but he very kindly permits them to be used by visitors staying at the inn. The use of the boats, however, and all fishing, is, as a matter of course, forbidden on Sundays ; nor would one suppose any person pretending to the character of a gentleman would seek to infringe this rule. Such was, however, the case on one occasion

during the year 1851, when some three or four snobs from Liverpool—whose names it would be a right punishment to publish—got hold of the boats, and set this rule at defiance. The desecration of the day would form no obstacle to men of this class, set at liberty in a remote village, and supposing themselves beyond the reach of public opinion. It may be as well, however, to hint to such men that they are mistaken in thinking themselves thus secure; that a note has been made of their names, for the purpose of preventing their again outraging public decency in a similar manner: and that I or any other person making enquiry, could publish their names to the world, if it were deemed expedient, together with their drunken frolics in the evening. Setting aside the sacrilege of thus profaning that Sabbath, which should be binding in a Christian country, no man of education or gentlemanly habits would outrage the feelings of a people scrupulously religious as are the Welsh, by the commission of an act which they look on with dislike and abhorrence. But some men are most ready to preach, “Do at Rome as they at Rome do,” so long as the doing accords with their secret inclinations—but are very indignant and exclaim against bigoted interference, if the same rule is

pressed on their attention, when the inclination to obey it is wanting.

It can scarcely be too windy for Tal-y-llyn, so long as you are able to sit in the boat and keep your flies on the water: the sport is never good until the wind runs high enough to cause long streaks of foam along the lake, amongst which you are almost always sure to rise fish, but not always so sure to kill them; they often, particularly in the Autumn, rise *short*,—or as they call it in the north “*close ill*”—that is in play, not in earnest; and I have found in such cases the average to be one fish hooked for ten or sometimes twelve rises. The best sport I ever had on Tal-y-llyn, was on the 17th May, 1847, when between the hours of 12 and 2.30, I killed 33 fish, weighing $12\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.; raining hard all the time.

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